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WEST BENGAL

Development at its best wins the Panchayat



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT ON SEVEN YEARS OF AITC GOVERNMENT



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee welcoming Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 25, 2018. The Bangladesh Prime Minister visited the state to inaugurate the Bangladesh Bhavan in Kolkata and receive D. Litt. Honoris Causa from the Kazi Nazrul Islam University

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Mamata Banerjee magic continued to overwhelm West Bengal with her party All India Trinamool Congress registering a mammoth victory in Panchayat election, riding on development agenda aggressively pursued by the Chief Minister, pushing the Opposition almost out of the race, writes our Consulting Editor PRADIP KUMAR CHAKRABORTY (PKC).



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We, in this special supplement, compile sectorwise writeups on some landmark achievements of the Mamata Banerjee government since May 2011.

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COVER STORY

Development at its best wins the Panchayat

Mamata Banerjee- magic continued to overwhelm West Bengal with her party All India Trinamool Congress registering a mammoth victory in Panchayat election, riding on development agenda aggressively pursued by the Chief Minister, pushing the Opposition almost out of the race.

The Opposition roar in the run-up to the rural polls ended in a whimper as AITC were set to control more Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats compared to its tally in last election.

The rural polls held on May 14 were seen in political circles as significant since it is the last pan-Bengal exercise before the Lok Sabha elections.

Despite a united opposition and huge propaganda against it, the AITC was set to win 90 percent of the rural seats in the state, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said speaking to reporters on May 17 evening.

"The results show that it is the victory of the people and democracy. It is also a victory of the Ma-Mati-Manush."

The Chief Minister said, "Such a huge mandate is impossible without people's support.... For the sake of argument, I admit that nine can be turned into 10, but zero can not be pushed to 10".

Banerjee said, "Despite such a maligning campaign against us," AITC won a massive victory. "I did not say a word since the election took place, but today I want to ask everybody why we were insulted such a way. People are with us," she added.

Results only reaffirmed that seven years of the incumbency failed to sway the people's trust on the AITC government.

The results showed AITC's massive support base in Rural Bengal, which accounts for 40 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats of the state ahead of next years Lok Sabha poll.

Elections were held to 621 Zilla Parishad seats, 6,118 Panchayat Samiti seats and 31,777 Gram Panchayat seats.

Trinamool Congress gained an unprecedented stranglehold in Bengal's three-tier panchayat administration securing 95% of the total contested seats in Zilla Parishad, 81.3% of the contested seats in the Panchayat Samiti and 66.93% of the contested seats in Gram Panchayat.

The All India Trinamool Congress won 590 of the contested Zilla Parishad seats, 4974 Panchayat Samiti seats and 21,269 Gram Panchayat seats.

The results revealed that Trinamool Congress had bagged all seats of Zilla Parishads in Jalpaiguri, Dakshin Dinajpur, Purba Bardhaman and Paschim Bardhaman, North and South 24 Parganas, Bankura, Hooghly, Purba and Paschim Medinipurs.

The BJP was a far distant second, securing 3.5 % of the contested seats in Zilla Parishad, 12.41 % of the seats in Panchayat Samiti and 18.17 in Gram Panchayat.

The party won 22 Zilla Parishad seats, 760 Panchayat Samiti seats and 5,776 Gram Panchayat seats.

The remarkable victory for Trinamool Congress showed that revival of [illegible] in Bengal is still a far cry.

The Left Front slipped to the third position at the Gram Panchayat level and to the fourth position at both the Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad levels from the second place it had occupied in the last panchayat elections five years back.

Left Front major CPI(M) could not open its account in Zilla Parishad. Its partner Forward Bloc managed to win in one Zilla Parishad seat.

The Left secured 2.12% of the total contested seats in Panchayat Samitis and 5.39% of the seats in Gram Panchayats.

The Left won one seat in Zilla Parishad, 130 seats in Panchayat Samiti and 1714 seats in Gram Panchayat, with CPI(M) leading the tally with 1,486 seats. The Left score was lower than Independents in both Zilla Parishads and Gram Panchayats.

Independents won two Zilla Parishad seats, 112 Panchayat Samiti seats and 1,850 Gram

Panchayat General Election 2018

ZILLA PARISHAD BRIEF RESULT

District / Block	Total Seats	Total Contested Seats					
		AITC	BJP	INC	AIFB	IND	Total
COOCHBEHAR	33	31				1	32
JALPAIGURI	19	19					19
UTTAR DINAJPUR	26	21	1		1		23
DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	18	18					18
MALDA	38	29	6	2			37
MURSHIDABAD	70	21		1			22
NADIA	47	42	2				44
NORTH 24 PARGANAS	57	48					48
SOUTH 24-PARGANAS	81	53					53
HOWRAH	40	39				1	40
HOOGHLY	50	37					37
PURBA MEDINIPUR	60	53					53
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	51	51					51
PURULIA	38	26	9	3			38
BANKURA	46	15					15
PURBA BARDHAMAN	58	41					41
BIRBHUM	42	0					0
ALIPURDUAR	18	17	1				18
JHARGRAM	16	13	3				16
PASCHIM BARDHAMAN	17	16					16
TOTAL:	**825**	**590**	**22**	**6**	**1**	**2**	**621**

Panchayat seats while nine Panchayat Samiti seats and 103 Gram Panchayat seats went to others.

Indian National Congress similarly cut a sorry figure. It made its presence felt in few pockets, ending up at the fourth position at the Gram Panchayat level and ranked third at both the upper tiers. The party, which had managed to retain a number of seats in Uttar Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad in 2016 Assembly, fared badly in all the three districts with AITC emerging as the strongest political party.

In Murshidabad, which was regarded a Congress stronghold till the Assembly polls of 2016, Trinamool Congress virtually wiped out Congress state president Adhir Chowdhury's party in his own backyard. In the 1491 contested Gram Panchayat seats in Murshidabad district, Trinamool Congress won in 1045, while the Congress managed 186.

In the 2013 elections, Trinamool Congress had won in 13 of the 17 Zilla Parishads, and the Left won in two Zilla Parishads Jalpaiguri and Uttar Dinajpur, while Congress got hold of Murshidabad and Malda.

In the panchayat election this time, Congress got 0.97 % of total contested seats in Zilla Parishad, 2.17 % of the seats in Panchayat Samitis and 3.55 % of the seats in Gram Panchayats.

Congress won in six Zilla Parishad seats, 133 Panchayat Samiti seats and 1065 Gram Panchayat seats.

Panchayat General Election 2018
PANCHAYAT SAMITI BRIEF RESULT

District	Total Seats	Total Contested Seats									
		AITC	BJP	CPI	CPIM	INC	AIFB	RSP	OTHERS	IND	Total
COOCHBEHAR	366	227	11		1		1			21	261
JALPAIGURI	234	176	38		1	1					216
UTTAR DINAJPUR	287	189	55		10	6	5			14	279
DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	187	140	34		1			3		1	179
MALDA	423	246	97	1	8	55				9	416
MURSHIDABAD	736	220	12		3	22		1		6	264
NADIA	541	370	64		18	5				3	460
NORTH 24 PARGANAS	589	391	24		5	2	1			2	425
SOUTH 24-PARGANAS	913	504	37		17	5			7	9	579
HOWRAH	462	311	25		1		2			4	343
HOOGHLY	607	332	6		4					4	346
PURBA MEDINIPUR	661	497	5		6	3				3	514
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	611	421	45		6					15	487
PURULIA	446	234	142		21	33	4		2	5	441
BANKURA	535	153	33		3					5	194
PURBA BARDHAMAN	618	213	3		1					5	222
BIRBHUM	465	51	8		1						60
ALIPURDUAR	188	122	56		1	1		1			181
JHARGRAM	187	112	65		2					6	185
PASCHIM BARDHAMAN	161	65			1						66
Total	**9217**	**4974**	**760**	**1**	**111**	**133**	**13**	**5**	**9**	**112**	**6118**

The ruling AITC had won 16873 out of 48650 Gram Panchayat seats, 3099 out of 9217 Panchayat Samiti seats and 204 out of 825 Zilla Parishad seats uncontested. The results of those seats have been put on hold on the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order.

Facing all odds, Banerjee remained focused on the development agenda. Rebuilding rural Bengal is her priority after accomplishing the task of dislodging the Left Front government from power.

During the last seven years Banerjee travelled extensively in the districts, personally monitored projects and interacted freely with the locals.

Beginning her second innings as West Bengal Chief Minister in May 2016, the Chief Minister had said that her government's focus would be on the young generation, creation of more employment opportunities and on the overall development of quality of life for all.

Her commitment and earnest endeavour in her second term was to carry forward the development agenda with greater pace, greater focus and greater outreach.

In spite of the huge debt burden left by the preceding government, her government has carried the development agenda for all sections of the society.

Bengal has emerged as number one in the country in rural employment generation. Under 100 days work scheme as on March 31, 2018, Bengal has generated 30.98 crore person-days, which is the highest in the country, Banerjee had revealed in a Facebook post on April 3 last. Moreover West Bengal reported expenditure of ₹ 8007.56 crore under this scheme in 2017-18, which is again highest in the country.

In the last seven

Panchayat General Election 2018
GRAM PANCHAYAT BRIEF RESULT

District / Block	Total Seat	Total Contested Seats									
		AITC	BJP	CPI	CPI(M)	INC	AIFB	RSP	OTHERS	IND	TOTAL
COOCHBEHAR	1966	1051	116		3	7	8			110	1295
JALPAIGURI	1347	806	308	1	51	21	4	2	3	35	1231
UTTAR DINAJPUR	1649	786	382	3	101	83	44	3	2	159	1563
DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	975	546	236	1	48	19		45	1	24	920
MALDA	2281	1058	532	1	114	399		7		119	2230
MURSHIDABAD	4171	1045	124		64	186		14	1	57	1491
NADIA	3209	1641	647		179	59	1	2	6	153	2688
NORTH 24 PARGANAS	3560	1971	328	2	89	41	6			136	2573
SOUTH 24-PARGANAS	4883	2137	417		165	34	1	8	77	216	3055
HOWRAH	2431	1404	293	2	51	11	3			47	1811
HOOGHLY	3192	1413	167	1	115	12	1			124	1833
PURBA MEDINIPUR	3378	2039	189	14	135	16		1	3	189	2586
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	3040	1549	417	6	88	4			2	158	2224
PURULIA	1944	839	645	1	155	150	24		6	100	1920
BANKURA	2505	545	234		59	1	1	1	1	70	912
PURBA BARDHAMAN	3234	1040	29		14	3				47	1133
BIRBHUM	2247	205	63		5	1	1			4	279
ALIPURDUAR	999	548	307		26	17		17	1	37	953
JHARGRAM	806	373	329	1	13					63	779
PASCHIM BARDHAMAN	833	273	13	1	11	1				2	301
TOTAL:	48650	21269	5776	34	1486	1065	94	100	103	1850	31777

Results source: Website of the West Bengal State Election Commission as on June 1, 2018

years, she held over 400 Administrative Review meetings and Government Public Distribution Programmes . She took the administrative review meetings of the district, with officials from the Block level right up to the state secretariat, to take stock of development work and delivery of benefits to people of the districts in a timely manner.

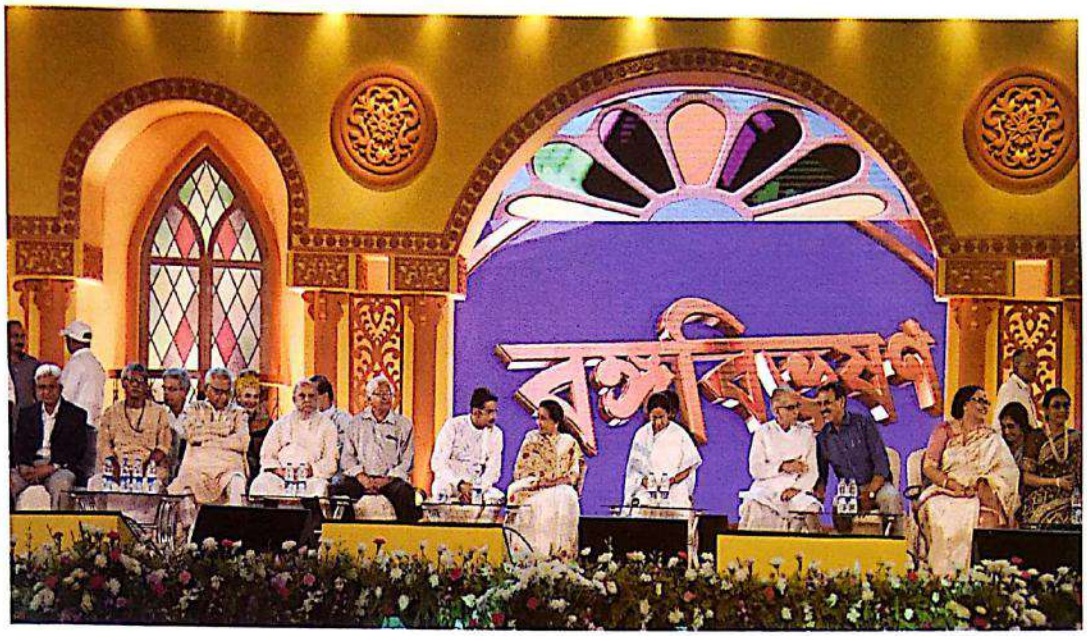
A large number of government welfare projects were launched in the districts which helped significantly improve infrastructure, road connectivity, healthcare, drinking water, education including skill development, self-employment and other important areas and give overall development of the districts a huge boost.

The Kanyashree scheme, the dream project of the Chief Minister and the largest cash transfer scheme has benefited about 50 lakh school girls. Through Sabooj Sathi scheme 70 lakh bicycles were distributed to children, a move credited to have reduced drop-outs in rural Bengal.

Vastly improved rural roads, drinking water facilities, electricity, access to piped water supply to households, poor households receiving money from the government to build a pucca house and toilet, free health services and many other welfare benefits have come as a boon for the rural populace. For the people of rural Bengal, mud roads have become a thing of the past.

PRADIP KUMAR CHAKRABORTY (PKC)

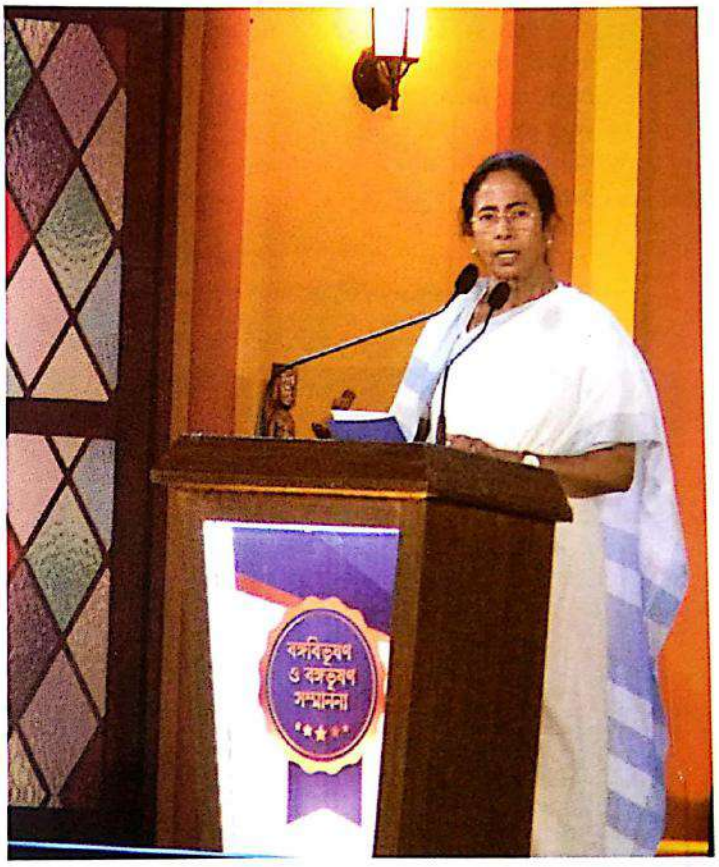
Banga Samman 2018



Bengal's highest civilian awards, Banga Bibhusan and Banga Bhusan, were conferred on May 21, 2018 for outstanding contribution in various fields. Instituted by the present government in 2011, this is the seventh year of the awards, and the ceremony was held in a befitting manner in Nazrul Mancha.

The awards this year were handed over to 11 great achievers from various fields. The highlight of the list was indeed the legendary vocalist Asha Bhosle who was honoured with Banga Bibhusan.

"I am elated that Asha Bhosle has accepted our invitation and has taken the pain to come here. We can never forget her contribution. One cannot forget Ashaji's connection to the soil of Bengal," Chief Minister Mamata





Banerjee said at the event. On Banerjee's request, the veteran singer mesmerised everyone by rendering a Bengali song.

Other seven recipients of the prestigious Banga Bibhusan award this year were Girija Shankar Roy (academician), Suhrid Kumar Bhowmick (linguist), Samaresh Majumder (writer), Subratra Bhattacharya (footballer), Md Habib (footballer), Prosenjit Chatterjee (actor) and Shyamal Kumar Sen (former Governor of West Bengal).

This year's Banga Bhusan awards went to three renowned artistes such as elocutionist Partha Ghosh and vocalists Sriradha Bandyopadhyay and Arundhati Home Chowdhury.



















Photos: Protik Sett, Sanjay Samaddar

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Committed to working for the people: CM on 7th anniversary of Maa Mati Manush Govt

On the occasion her government completing seven years since coming to power in May 2011, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee greeted the people of the state and reiterated her commitment towards working for the betterment of the people. She, on the occasion, posted on her Twitter page, "On May 20, 2011, the first Maa Mati Manush government took oath of office. It has been seven years and we continue to be committed to working for the betterment of the people."



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Parivartan
Achieved and sustained

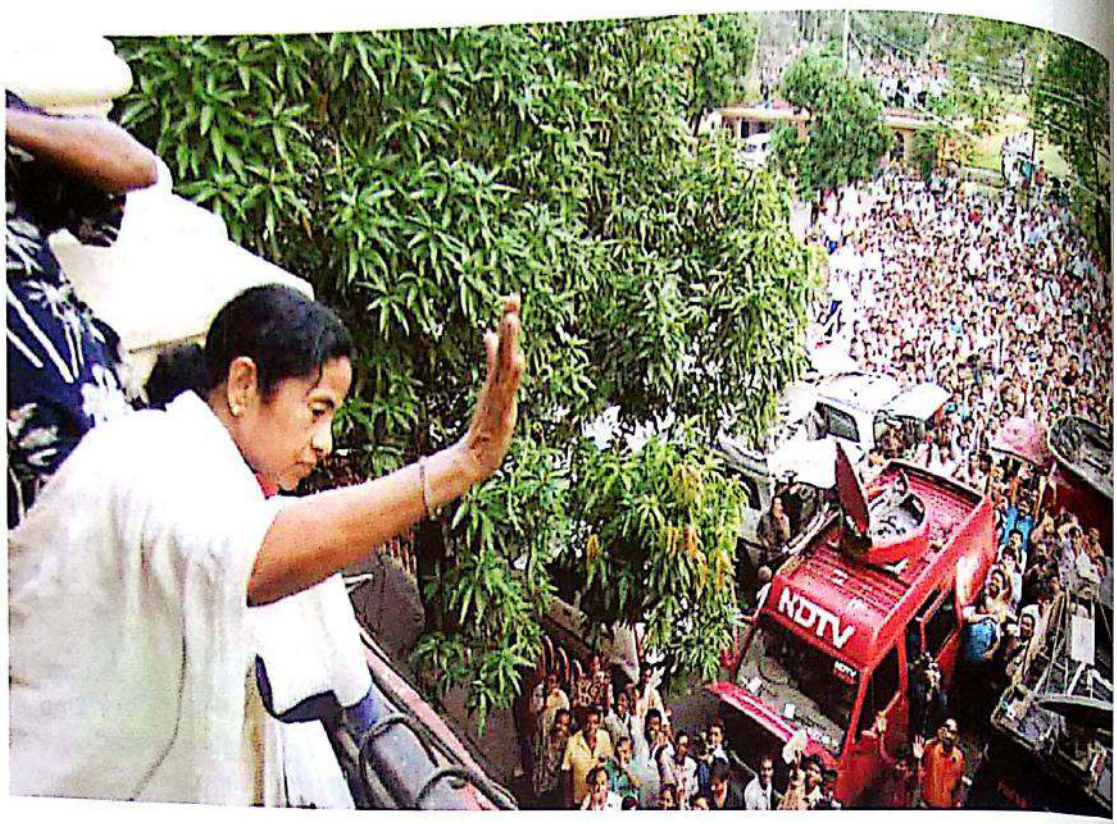
"We see her as a symbol of change and sincerely want her to bring new awakening in Bengal." This was the instant reply of one Nabarun Chandra Deb Burman, a middle-aged man sitting in a tea stall at Hatibagan in northern Kolkata, when asked to react on the new state government's completion of 100 days in office on the 27th of August 2011.

"She had been our only ray of hope, and so we voted her in. Already there are signs that she would brighten up our lives for a long long time." This was what one Maidul Haque, a school teacher in his thirties, waiting for his bus at Jadavpur in the southern fringe of the city, had to say in reply to the same question.

Well, not just Deb Burman or one Haque alone but almost everybody reacted the same way on that triple-figure day of the new era in the state.

Yes, 100 days back, history was created in West Bengal. The 34-year long Left Front rule came to an end. At 1.05 pm, Mamata Banerjee, clad in a simple white sari and wearing a tricolor uttariya, took oath as the first woman Chief Minister of West Bengal. As the then Governor of the state, M K Narayanan, administered her the oath of office and secrecy as Chief Minister, thousands of people that included the relatives of the victims of Nandigram and Singur on the one hand, and the distinguished personalities such as Pranab Mukherjee, P Chidambaram, A K Anthony and top industrialists Yogi Deveshwar, Harsh Neotia and the like as well as a galaxy of dignitaries like Sandhya Mukherjee, Dwijen Mukherjee, Rituparno Ghosh, Prosenjit, Ranjit Mallik and daughter Koel, Supriya Devi, Mahasveta Devi, Suvaprasanna, Jeet, Sandhya Ray on the other hand witnessed the occasion at





the Raj Bhavan lawn, in one of the most–if not the most–crowded swearing-in ceremonies of a West Bengal chief minister. After the swearing-in was over with her uttering of the words "Jai Hind", she smiled as she turned to the Governor. A deafening applause signalled the start of her reign.

Some hours earlier, Mamata Banerjee had set off from her humble Harish Chatterjee Street house on a journey to change Bengal's course. Thousands of supporters had already lined the route she would take to Raj Bhavan, holding puja thalis and blowing conch shells. Many were barefoot, as if had come to worship a deity.

After the historic swearing-in ceremony, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee walked the 1 km road from Raj Bhavan to the Writers' Building as euphoric, swelling crowds–nearly 2.5 lakh–thronged both sides of the road. "Democracy has to be with the people, and so, having seen the crowd, I sought for the Governor's permission to walk to the Writers' Buildings from Raj Bhavan," she later said.

Bureaucrats and security officials escorted her up the same flight of stairs along which she had been dragged down in 1993. In the corridor, she suddenly cut her brisk stride and turned towards a balcony. She stood there for a while and waved to the delirious crowd. A bodyguard swiftly crouched before her, hanging on to the low guard rails to protect her from the mad scramble of photojournalists. And then, with a final wave, she walked off to the CM's chamber. It was 4.44 pm then on the clock, exactly the time when she had been dragged by the hair from in front of the same chamber eighteen years back. She had vowed that she would set her feet in the Writers' Buildings again only after the existing regime was gone. It took eighteen years to become a reality.





Six and a half years have gone by since then. In the meantime came the 2016 state elections. And people largely reposed their faith on her once again. Bagging 211 seats in a 294-seat House, defying the infamous 'anti-incumbency factor' was no mean an achievement for a ruling party in any kind of democracy. It was all possible due to her dynamic leadership.

The major industry captains welcomed the return in unequivocal terms.

T V Narendran, Chairman, Confederation of Indian Industries (Eastern Region), said, "The decisive election victory of the Mamata Banerjee reaffirms the direction of the government and sets the tone for faster economic reforms in West Bengal."

Sanjiv Goenka, Chairman, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, said, "Mamata Banerjee's return [to power] is a great news for those who want Bengal to join and win the eagerly-awaited race for economic development."

Harsh Neotia, President, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industries, said, "This mandate shows people have voted in favour of the development work in the last five years."

Sunil Kanoria, Chairman, ASSOCHAM, said, "This huge mandate again proves there is no alternative to the politics of development."



Manish Goenka, President, Merchant Chambers of Commerce & Industries, said, "MCCI will support in all developmental endeavours in the state."

The reactions of the commoners, the people belonging to the milieu of our Nabarun Chandra Deb Burman of Hatibagan or Maidul Haque of Jadavpur, were not anything different either.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Singur
A pledge redeemed against all odds

Singur, that's where it all started from. The grand and historic *Parivartan* in West Bengal. True that later the infamous Nandigram massacre would certainly add enough fuel to the fire the people of the state had been carrying in their hearts, which would eventually get its vent in the EVMs in 2011. But the ball had set to roll much earlier, in May 2006, when the erstwhile regime forcibly acquired 997 acres of fertile agricultural land to facilitate Tata Motors to set up its small car plant.

Jump cut to an afternoon five years later. May 20, 2011. The day started with the swearing-in of Mamata Banerjee as the first lady Chief Minister of the state. And in the afternoon, in its first meeting, the new state Cabinet resolved to return 400 acres of land to the unwilling farmers of Singur.

But the process was neither simple nor easy. The law in force till then, the Land Acquisition Act 1894—the one enacted by the British in their colonial interest and taken advantage of the mighty Left—was the main stumbling block. So a new law was needed.

All documents on the Singur land lease to Tata Motors and vendors were sought by the new government to see if the process of returning 400 acres to unwilling farmers could be fast-tracked. The departments of Commerce & Industries and Information Technology were asked to draw up a status report on distribution of land to industry since 1991. Copies of the lease agreement and correspondence since day one were sought from the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) as well. All the data thus collected were collated on war-footing, and at a lightening pace, in actually less than a month's time, the new Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Bill 2011 was passed in the Assembly on June 14.

Resistance, as apprehended, came by. On June 22, 2011, Tata Motors moved the Calcutta High Court challenging the Bill. After a legal battle of three months, on September 28, 2011, the Calcutta High Court upheld the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011. But once again, exactly a year after the first litigation, on June 22, 2012, a division bench of Calcutta





High Court strikes down the Bill on an appeal by Tata Motors. Legal battle continued as the new government was determined to see to the end of it, and turned the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Bill 2011 into an Act, which became the bone of contention at the Supreme Court. And finally, four years later, did come the day, the 31st of August 2016, when the apex court of the country quashed the 2006 land acquisition and upheld the farmers' right on their land.

The landmark verdict said that the land acquisition in 2006 did not even follow the rules laid by the Land Acquisition Act 1894, which has now been replaced by a new law in 2013. In a reality check to state acquisition of agricultural land under emergency clause for industrial projects of private companies, the apex court observed that the emergency clause had been employed in 2006 without even bothering to give the farmers a "decent opportunity to raise their complaints" and quashed the "forcible acquisition" of 997 acres of fertile agricultural land and directed the West Bengal government to take possession of the land and distribute it to the land owners within 12 weeks. The Bench of Justices V Gopala Gowda and Arun Mishra, in its verdict, also held that the farmers who got compensation from the government would not return it because they had been deprived of their livelihood for the last ten years, adding further that those landowners who had not received the compensation would be permitted to collect it from the office of the Land Acquisition Collector without any prejudice to their rights on land.

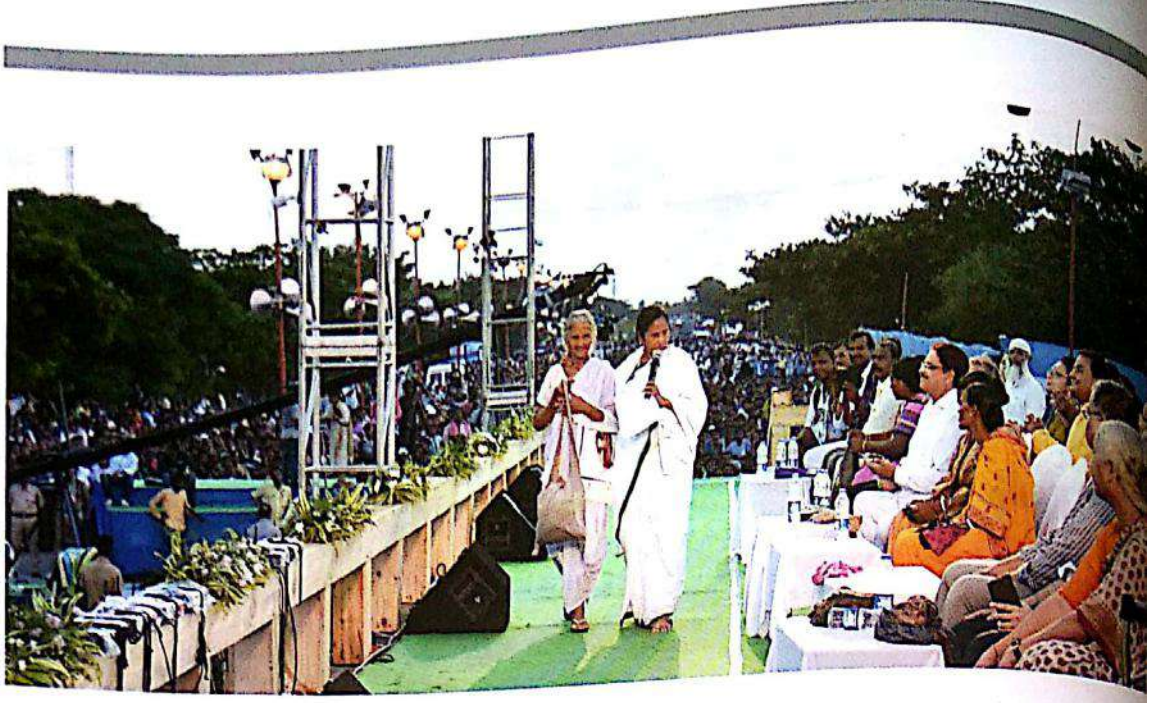
"The acquisition of land for and at the instance of the company was sought to be disguised as acquisition of land for 'public purpose' in order to circumvent compliance with the mandatory provisions of the Land Acquisition Act. This action of the state government is grossly perverse and illegal and void ab initio in law and such an exercise of power by the state government for acquisition of lands cannot be allowed under any circumstance," said the apex court.

The momentous 204-page judgment, which is a political as well as moral victory for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, went on to observe that although it is "completely understandable" for a government to acquire land to set up industrial units, the "brunt of development" should not be borne by "the weakest sections of the society, more so, the poor agricultural workers."

This is precisely what Mamata Banerjee used to say consistently throughout her all-out and historic movement against the acquisition and even after becoming the state Chief Minister.

"I feel a lot of joy today on this historic verdict. Mingled with the joy there are also tears of joy." This was how Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reacted immediately to the apex court verdict.

"We," she further said, "have been saying all along that the land acquisition in Singur was illegal. We have been vindicated. The farmers of Singur did not part with their land against all odds. We salute them. Land in Singur will be returned within the time frame set by court."



And she kept her word. Redeeming a pledge she made years back, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on September 14 last, which she had declared to be observed as the Singur Day, returned 9,117 land records to the local farmers and compensated 800 peasants from whom land had been taken against their will for the Tata Motors' Nano project 10 years back.

Amid chants and songs praising the role of the state government, thousands watched as the Chief Minister personally handed over the deeds of land and the compensatory cheques to many of the farmers who responded with warm smiles and even touched her feet in gratitude at the Singur Day venue at Sanapara. It was the same spot of the Durgapur Expressway where Mamata Banerjee had held a 16-day sit-in protest in 2008. Several activists and distinguished intellectuals including Medha Patkar, Jogen Choudhury, Kabir Suman, Pratul Mukhopadhyay, Nrisinghaprasad Bhaduri, state Ministers including Partha Chatterjee, Firhad Hakim, Bratya Basu, Indranil Sen and many others were also present on dais and witnessed the historic stream of events. Referring to one of the mainstays of the Singur movement from the intelligentsia, author Mahasveta Devi, who had passed away only a few weeks back, the Chief Minister said that she was missing her a lot on this "joyous occasion", adding, "Had Mahasweta Devi been alive, she would have been very happy today."

Offering her "salute" to the farmers who had stood up and continued to fight hard to protect their right to land, the Chief Minister reflected, "Historic struggles are never lost in time."

Reminding one and all the promise she had made five years back in the very first press conference immediately after having come to power, a visibly emotional Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "This is a big victory. We have delivered on our promise of returning the land. This is people's victory. This land belonged to the farmers. It will remain with them."

Stressing that the state government has been making all possible endeavours to abide by the August 31 Supreme Court verdict to the letters, the Chief Minister said, "Survey and demarcation of 623 acres of land out of 997 acres is complete. Soil testing is going on. All assistance for making this land cultivable as well as fertile will be provided. We will also disburse ` 10000 each to



the farmer families to aid them in farming."

Among other measures the government has already contemplated, a Customs Hiring Centre has been set up in Singur to help farmers get loans while a Training And Demonstration Centre for providing technological know-how for the farmers would also be set up.

All the farmers who received the compensation cheques and deeds of land from the Chief Minister on the Singur Day celebration dais sang peans for her, saying that the present state government had been taking several steps to help them augment their produce and to ensure maximum profit for them. They praised the state government for opening up new avenues in the agriculture sector by introducing need-based farming and setting up of more agro-based industries.

"There is no question of using the land that we have got back for any other purpose apart from cultivating crops," said one Alochaya Manna who, among others, received the compensation and deed of land for her plot. "Earlier," she went on to say, "there used to be three to four crops a year on the plot that was acquired for the car project. It may take some time but we are confident that the land will get back its characteristics."

Stating that her son, who had been the lone earner of the family, struggled a lot for the past few years in earning livelihood and had to keep moving from one place to another in search of a job, Manna further said, "We are eagerly waiting for the day from when my son can start farming on our land for which we had been fighting for a decade."



A 30-year-old farmer Prasenjit Das, who also received deed of land from the hands of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the Singur Day, stated that his father had four bighas of land that was forcefully taken away, and said emphatically, "There can be nothing better than getting the plot back as it will help us earn our livelihood, and at the same time we can now go for tie-ups with the agro-based industries."

Das, a visibly happy young man, said that the Supreme Court's verdict in favour of the farmers is not only the victory of the people of Singur but it has also paved a way for better days to come for the farmers of the entire nation.

Later, on October 20, 2016, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee led the Singur farmers to resume farming on the land that had illegally been given to the Tata Motors's Nano car project.

She sowed seeds of mustard on those plots of land to mark the formal recommencement of farming.





The process of giving physical possession of the land in Singur to around 4,000 farmers also got off to a start on the day with the Chief Minister handing over plots to the tune of 103 acres to the respective farmers for cultivation. She also inaugurated the first of the 66 deep tubewell pumps that the state government would install for proper irrigation of the 997 acres of farm land. Besides, she handed over seeds and agricultural equipment to the farmers, too.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister stressed that the state government has strictly followed the Supreme Court order and has spared no efforts in making the land cultivable again.

Underlining the pivotal place of the Singur movement in the history of agitation for land rights, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reflected, "The Singur movement will become an international model for land rights," adding, "The Singur Movement teaches us that we should never run away from a fight".

She thanked all who had helped the state government in bringing the land back to its original state. "I thank every officer and the local people for their help in getting the land ready for farming," she said. She also thanked all the luminaries and activists from the intelligentsia who "wholeheartedly supported" the movement. "We will make a monument to commemorate the sacrifice and the hard work of the people of Singur," she stated.

With the observation that "good governance depends on team work, transparency and fulfilling promises", the Chief Minister said that she was very happy as "Singur is smiling again" since they had got their forcibly snatched away land back.

Thousands of people from different parts of the state, including those involved with the movement, had turned up in Singur on the day to witness the historic moment when the Chief Minister completed the process of giving physical possession of the plots to the farmers.

Time went by. And within a year's time, as per statistics coming out on April 30, 2017, following record potato production earlier in the year, Singur once again scripted history by producing record output of paddy, amounting to 32 maund (nearly 1195 kg). SRI and Drum-seeder techniques were used for paddy cultivation on 230 acres of land in Singur. Transplanter machines were used for cutting the paddy. The results are for all to see.

Singur is smiling again.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT



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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Agriculture
Creating a better state for farmers

In a predominantly agrarian state like West Bengal, the socio-economic condition of the small and marginal farmers who cultivate almost 95 per cent of the arable land in the state is the best indicator in terms of development. This was one of the first things the new regime led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee realised back in May 2011. Therefore, the new government pursued a new vision for agricultural development: "to transform agriculture into a vocation which is economically viable and globally competitive so as to enable every farmer to experience substantial increase in the income in foreseeable future." It focused on enhancing their income ever since its inception. The latest figures show that the annual household income of the state's farmers has registered a quantum leap from ₹ 91,000 in the 2010-11 financial year to ₹ 2.39 lakh at the end of the 2016-17 financial year. While the national goal set by the union government was to double the farmers' income by the end of the year 2022, West Bengal has already achieved a 2.6 times rise, which is quite a remarkable achievement in every sense.

It goes without saying that this achievement called for proper planning. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's vision for development of agriculture made a paradigm shift from a 'yield increase approach' to 'income driven approach'. Therefore, the entire strategy had to be 'market demand driven' rather than 'solely technology driven'. The most critical component of the suggested way forward was a shift to a market demand-led strategy.

In 2011, the largest traditional crop grown in the state, viz, bold grain rice, eg, Swarna Masuri, was going a-begging, without demand consequent to successive over-production of cereals in the country, not fetching even production cost. On the other hand, prices of some agri-produce, viz, all varieties of pulses and oil seeds including ground nut; even fine grain and short grain





aromatic rice, maize were in strong demand realising remunerative prices. Similarly, there was growing demand for better quality fruits and vegetable, improving their realisation with varietal preferences.

Since the very beginning, the new regime started procuring the state's main crop, paddy, at the minimum support price directly from the farmers and making payment directly to them through real-time gross settlement (RTGS) in 72 hours.

The new state government also persuaded the union government to remove all restrictions on export of all varieties of rice. Since February 2012, the state government, under close supervision of the Chief Minister, supported export of surplus clean rice out of the state.

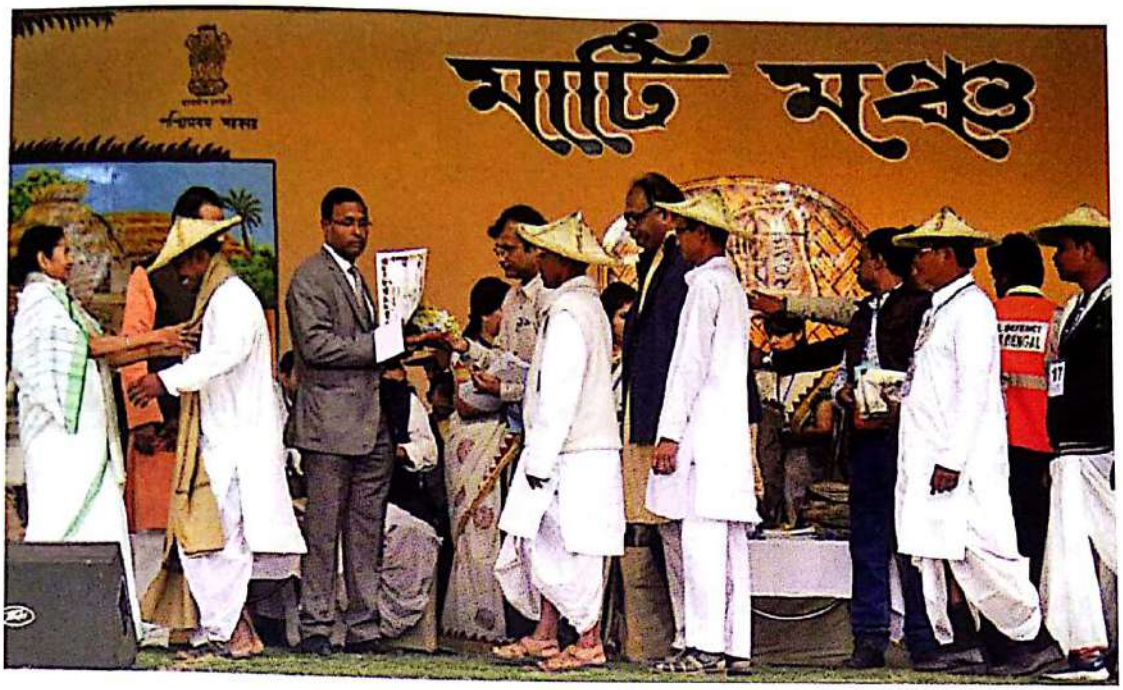
These two important steps, coupled with crash crop diversification from coarse rice in low-yielding areas to pulses, oil seeds, maize etc, brought about a step change in realisation for farmers' produce and their income, fuelling the rural economy and investment in agriculture.

Simultaneously, the government explored all possibilities of developing appropriate horticultural crops, dairy, livestocks and fishery to augment the livelihood of the state's farmers. New water resource created through Jal Bharo Jal Dharo scheme offered integrated opportunity to accelerated development.

The new government has also taken several steps to open the market for better realisation by the farmers by two amendments to the Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC) Act in 2014 and 2017.

The next factor, which affects a farmer's income, is access to technology. True that almost all farmers in the state have marginal holdings but this does not mean that large farm machines cannot be accessed. Government encouraged setting up of custom hiring centres. As more and more farmers shift to modern methods of cultivation and take multiple crops in a year, it is imperative that the enabling conditions for such





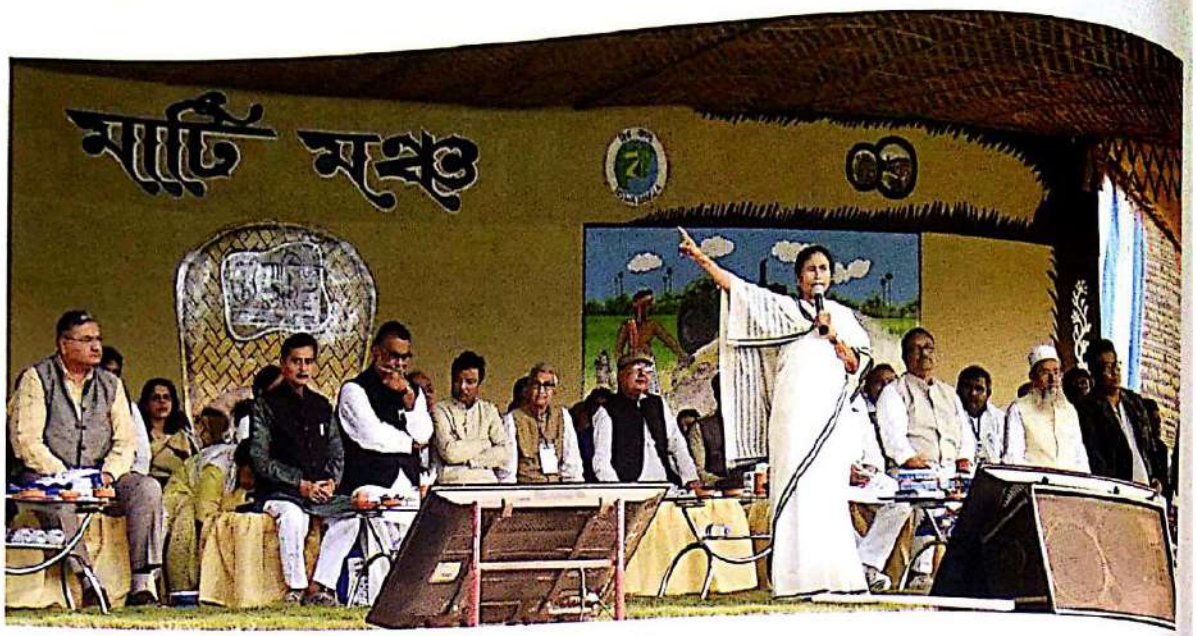
an endeavour are created. From handheld ploughs to powertillers, diggers and potato harvesters, tractors, transplanters, combined harvetsers have been the key to farm power increasing productivity at lower cost even in the lands of marginal farmers, delinking ownership from use by creating a new army of agri-entrepreneurs who are on the forefront of this transformation. As the adage goes that a bad workman quarrels with his tools! A farmer is now being asked to get used to a new generation of tools and skills hea has not inherited from his forefathers. These will have to be formally learnt. Realising this, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee initiated the skill development programmes in agriculture under the Utkarsh Bangla project. A workshop of large farm machineries is being set up at Mati Tirtha, Burdwan, to demonstrate and train the youths on operations and maintenance of these large modern machineries. As many as 15 lakh demonstrations were organised on the marginal farmers' own plots throughout the state often with critical inputs including certified quality seeds of new crops and new varieties of crops for new methods of cultivation. This was in order to show them the benefit in terms of production, quality and better realisation of the produce.

Further, for intensifying the extension effort of the government, the Chief Minister, in 2012, introduced a novel internet/cloud-based technology through handheld tabs with all levels of extension personnel.

For the very first time, the farmers of the state are now being awarded with the Krishak Ratna and the Krishak Samman awards at the block level and the state level, respectively.



Another challenge at the policy level was to create an environment in which most farmers can access markets and get a better price for their produce. When a brainstorming was organised with the key stakeholders in the Agriculture department on what could be done to augment farmers' incomes, the lead pointer was to



markets. Realising that agricultural production typically takes place in areas, which are far removed from the consumption centres, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's idea was if markets are not reaching out to the farmers, then markets will have to be created close to the source. Motivated by this, the Agriculture and Agriculture Marketing departments went ahead with the establishment of Krishak Mandis in the agricultural farms of the state. For the last several years, pre-2011 that is, production and marketing had not worked in tandem, much to the detriment of the farmer's interest. But not anymore. With around 200 Krishak Mandis in operation now, a tie-up with aggregators and state procurement agencies to ensure that they are put to optimal use has been initiated, and farmers are bringing their produce to their own Mandis. Already, anecdotal evidence shows that the farmers have started getting higher realisation for their paddy substantially on account of the state procurement operations in most of these centres.

The Mamata Banerjee government has taken a series of other steps starting from distribution of tools to carrying out necessary research work to improve the agriculture sector in the state. In a bid to support farmers, the government even waived the tax and mutation on agricultural land, which has helped the cultivators in a big way.

Such initiatives have helped in an intensifying cultivation of crops. The state, at present, ranks first in paddy and vegetable production in the country. It stands second in potato production (after Uttar Pradesh). It is also the leading producer of jute, pineapple, litchi, mango and loose flowers. Cultivation of pulses, oilseeds and maize is fast increasing for much better realisation. As a result of all these, the state has bagged the union government's Krishi Karman Award for five consecutive years. To insulate the farmers from natural calamity to an extent, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee decided to provide crop insurance absolutely free for the farmers by absorbing the entire load of premia payable by the farmers. 44.7 lakh farmers and 21 lakh hectare of cultivated land have been brought under insurance so far. The corresponding figures were only 8.89 lakh farmers and 4.45 lakh hectare land, respectively, in 2011.

To mitigate the problem of natural calamity faced by the marginal farmers, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee not only decided to extend free crop insurance cover for them, she also ensured immediate payment by A/c Payee cheques to more than 60 lakh farm families besides providing critical inputs including certified short duration seeds of crops.

The state Agriculture department has been working in a mission mode for development of the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic manner by ensuring farmers' access to skills, technologies, markets and financial inclusion. The main objectives embodied in the State Agricultural Plan for the 12th Five-Year Plan included ensuring quantifiable improvement in production & productivity, reducing yield gap with focused interventions, maximizing returns to the farmers from the agriculture and allied sector, augmenting marketing interventions and export promotion, promoting competitiveness in agriculture and allied sector, and meeting the challenges of climate change and evolve mechanisms for effective drought and flood management.

To achieve these objectives, the Agriculture department has been working closely with the agri-allied departments such as Animal Resources Development, Fisheries, Agri-Marketing, Food Processing & Horticulture, Cooperation, Water Resources Investigation Development, Irrigation & Waterways, Forest, Sericulture, Food & Supplies and Panchayats & Rural Development. During the recent years, the focus has been on helping the small and marginal farmers in their endeavor to get better returns from farming through an improved package of practices, quality inputs, crop diversification, front-ended subsidy for farm mechanization, augmenting irrigation facilities through water conservation and watershed management and by providing market intelligence; the betterment of farmers belonging to SC, ST and backward classes; empowerment of women in agriculture; fostering public-private partnership involving the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

The department has also launched a dedicated agri-extension portal, Matir Katha (www.matirkatha.gov.in), which provides a dynamic platform to disseminate crop solution to farmers at the farm-gate level.

Dissemination of information on agricultural technologies and the ongoing government schemes is being taken through mass education and Krishi Melas organised at the block, subdivision and district levels.

Annual Mati Utsav, an idea conceptualised by the Chief Minister herself, is being observed–the first and only of its kind in India–since 2013 to recognise the importance of soil and the role of the farmers in feeding mankind and conserving the ecosystem. A permanent exhibition ground named Matitirtha-Krishitirtha has been set up for this purpose in Burdwan. This novel programme has earned the accolade of the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

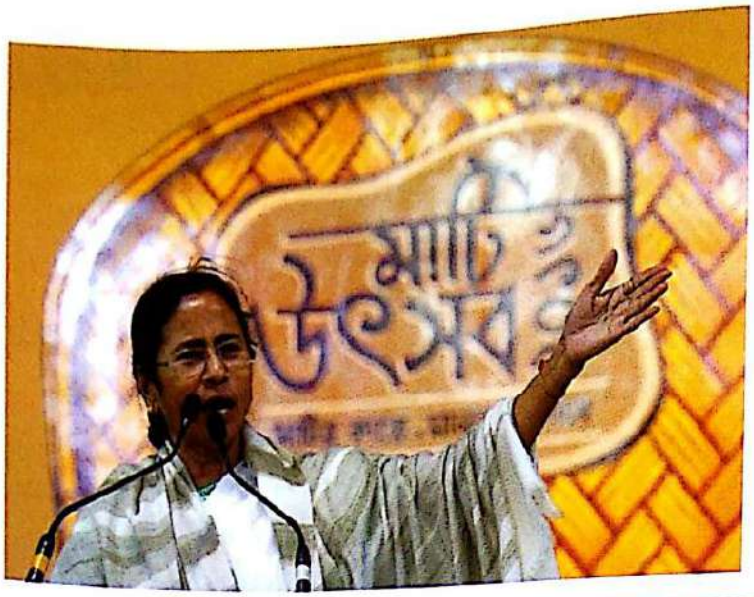
West Bengal is among the very few states in the country that have set up Custom Hiring Centres in order to facilitate easy access of modern large farm machineries to the small and marginal farmers at affordable cost. Subsidy worth more than ₹ 40 crore has been provided to the rural entrepreneurs for setting up of about 600 CHCs across the state.

An innovative Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme for sustainable management of soil health through soil analysis was initiated in the 2015-16 financial year. About 31 lakh SHCs have so far been issued to as many farmers.



Among other endeavours, three new Colleges of Agriculture have been established under the Bidhan Chandra Krishi Vishwavidyalay and the Uttar Banga Krishi Vishwavidyalay.

Under disaster damage relief operations, agricultural input subsidy relief worth almost ₹ 1400 crore has been disbursed among over 33 lakh farmers, so far, to help them tide over crop damages due to natural calamities. This apart,



141 Automatic Weather Stations have been established, so far, in different agricultural farms for automatic uninterrupted recording of weather data. These data are of immense help for development of decision support framework including support to the affected farmers through Crop Insurance.

Other landmark measures of the state government in the 2011-2018 time period include the Farmers' Old Age Pension (FOAP) scheme, through which annual assistance of around ₹ 60 crore is being provided to more than 66,000 farmers.

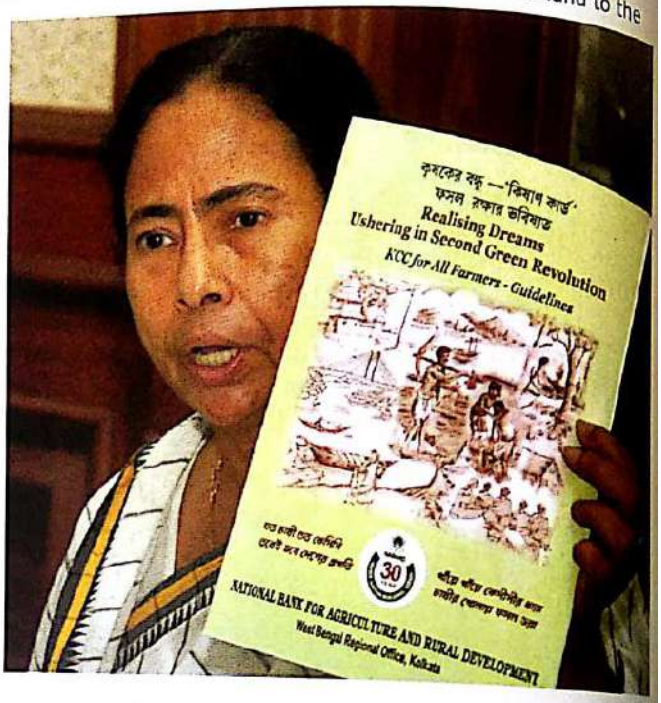
The state government has decided to provide marginal farmers whatever agricultural implements they need for free. They would be distributed through cooperative societies.

Another decision that has been taken to help farmers is to provide seeds for vegetables at highly subsidised rates through cooperative societies, for which ₹ 116 crore has been allocated. Instructions have been sent to ensure the seeds are provided as soon as possible for the summer crops. Since these seeds are certified by the government, they are of very good qualities. These seeds would also be produced by the cooperative societies.

The Soil Conservation wing of the state Agriculture department has undertaken land development and creation of irrigation potential in more than 45,000 hectare with an investment of about ₹ 175 crore so far. Also special emphasis is being placed on organic farming in cluster approach. So far 120 such clusters have been formed in 11 districts of the state.

An account of the state government's achievements in the agriculture sector during the 2011-18 time period can never be complete without the mention of, or at least a brief reference to, Singur from where the entire process of the historic Parivartan started.

The erstwhile Singur Project Area has been made suitable for cultivation before handing over the land to the farmers in 2016. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on October 20, 2016, led the Singur farmers to resume farming on the land that had illegally been given to the Tata Motors's Nano car project. She sowed seeds of mustard on those plots of land to mark the formal recommencement of farming. The boro paddy, apart from other crops, has already been cultivated on 230 acres of land there. (For details, check the writeup titled Singur: A pledge redeemed against all odds)



So, like Singur is smiling again, the overall agriculture sector of the state has also looked up quite a lot even in this short period of time.

The change in regime was embarked on fighting for the farmers' rights. One can well sum up that the farmers of West Bengal are living in a lot better state today.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Administrative Meetings
A new landmark in governance

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has created a record of sorts by presiding over a total of 407 Administrative Review meetings and public distribution programmes in the districts till the last ones held in Kalimpong for the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts on May 30, 2018, as part of her efforts to take the administration to the doorstep of the people since she assumed office.

This marked a significant milestone in the delivery of good governance to people of the state and decentralization of development process which is the most well-accepted policy of development.

Ever since coming to power in 2011, Mamata Banerjee- the people's Chief Minister- has time and again shown that she prefers to govern more from the ground zero-where the development activities actually take place-than from the state secretariat.

The Chief Minister does not like to be confined to her office on the 14th floor of Nabanna, the state secretariat for long. She likes to travel to various places to gain first-hand knowledge of problems being faced by people by interacting with them. She does not feel good if she does not get a chance to connect with people and have a first-hand experience.

No other Chief Minister of the state, for records, had held similar meeting. Mamata Banerjee has made it part of her routine to take the entire administration—right from the Chief Secretary and Home Secretary to departmental Principal Secretaries and police top brass- to the districts where they meet ground-level delivery system, including cops, regional transport officials, block-level executives, agriculture, health and education and several other department officials among others. A lot of issues get resolved on the spot.

"We have been conducting Chief Minister to BDO meetings, which is unique thing in the country. We do these meetings to oversee all development works being executed in the districts and that they are done quickly", said Banerjee, while inaugurating several projects in the Malda district and before attending a district administrative review meeting there.

"Because of the accountability, transparency and sustainable development work, we achieve 100 per cent of our goals", the Chief Minister while referring to the administrative review meetings had said at a ceremony last year when the UN honoured her with highest Public Service Award for the state government's initiative to combat child marriage and ensure education to the girl child in the state.

While these review meetings with officials from Block, Sub-division, District, right up to the State Secretariat, help significantly in monitoring government programmes and stock-taking at the ground-level, highlighting the state





government's initiatives, identify the problem areas and making sure projects are completed on time, government benefits were distributed to crores of beneficiaries on the occasion of public distribution programmes which were held before gathering of lakhs of people.

Hundreds of social welfare and development projects were launched in the districts to improve infrastructure, road connectivity, healthcare, drinking water, education including skill development, self-employment and other important areas to give overall development of the districts a huge boost.

An unprecedented kind of thing took place in Bengal, the holding of such a large number of Administrative Review meetings in the districts by a Chief Minister. Banerjee attended the four hundredth administrative meeting and public distribution programme at Purba Bardhaman district headquarters on March 20 this year.

The Administrative Review Meetings, televised live, were thrown open to also academicians, a posse of journalists, university student representatives of chambers of commerce as well as the private hospital s in the districts and the Chief Minister invited questions from them ,which covered a wide range of issues and answered all of them.

At the behest of the Chief Minister, the concerned district administrations started





inviting students to administrative review meetings in the districts to let them what Banerjee said "Have a first-hand feel of how this unique exercise of review of government schemes is made with field-level functionaries in presence of senior officers.



There was considerable euphoria and excitement generated over the meetings and, of large number of government officials from the district, each one was prepared to face any question thrown at them.



At these meetings the Chief Minister took stock of the progress made by each department, calling out district officials, secretaries and ministers to present their cases. She enquired about various issues , suggesting ways and means to handle them.

This year she started taking Administrative Review meetings in the districts from February 12 when she took the meeting for Nadia district at Krishnagar. She took the meeting for Jhargram district on February 16, for Murshidabad district on February 19, for South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur districts on February 21, for North 24 Parganas district on February 28.

In the month of March this year she Administrative Review meetings in as many as seven districts before the Model Code of Conduct for the Panchayat elections came into effect from March 31.

She took the Administrative Meeting for Paschim Bardhaman district at Durgapur on March 5 followed by such meetings for Purulia district on Mach 6, for Bankura district on March 7, for Purba Bardhaman district on March 20, for Birbhum district at Bolpur on March 21, for Paschim Midnapore district on March 22 and for South 24 Parganas district on March 26.

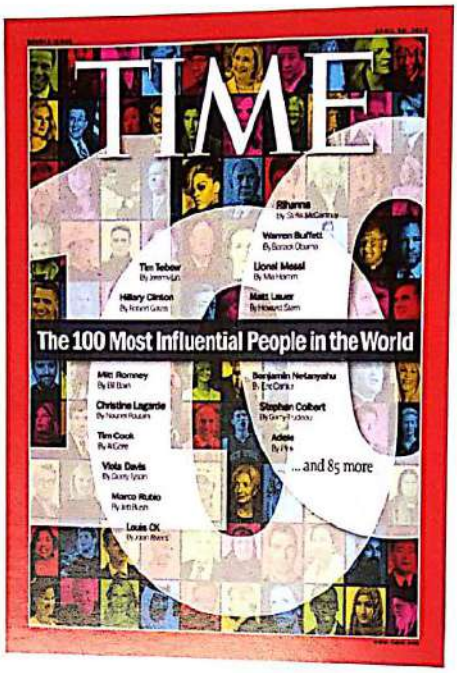
PRADIP KUMAR CHAKRABORTY (PKC)

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Global Recognition

Mamata Banerjee named among 100 Most Influential People in the World by *TIME* magazine

It came both as a surprise and also, at the same time, not as a surprise as such. At the threshold of the new government's completion of one year in office, TIME, the famous and prestigious American weekly, in its April 18, 2012 edition, published a list of 100 Most Influential People In The World that featured Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal.



Elaborating on the criteria on which the names had been picked, TIME explained that it was a list of one hundred "people who inspire us, entertain us, challenge us and change our world". The list included the then US President Barack Obama, billionaire investor Warren Buffet, Pakistan's first Oscar winner Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy and the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

On Mamata Banerjee, TIME, in their said edition, wrote although she has often been "labelled by her critics" as a "mercurial oddball and a shrieking street fighter", yet "ultimately she proved to be the consummate politician. Through successive elections, Ms Banerjee steadily expanded her power base while chipping away at those of her opponents."

Pointing out that Banerjee's "lower-middle-class background" could not pose an obstacle for her "in a country notorious for its dynasties", TIME went on to write, "In New Delhi's back rooms, where political horse trading is the name of the game, she excelled. On the streets, she out-Marxed the Marxists. And as Chief Minister of her home state, she has emerged as a populist woman of action poised to play an even greater role in the world's largest democracy."

Exhausting their superlatives on how she "spent years struggling on the margins", TIME further wrote, "Though much of Indian society remains hidebound in patriarchy and tradition, strong women still prevail in the nation's political life. Mamata Banerjee rose to the fore last year when she and a movement she built from the grassroots wrested control of her home state of West Bengal, ending three and a half decades of sclerotic communist rule."

Not stopping merely at publishing the list, TIME also held a "gala dinner" on the occasion on the 24th of that month. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee received the invitation with gentle calm and humbly regretted her inability to attend the dinner in New York as she thought she ought to go by her pre-scheduled fixture of visiting Lalgarh in Jangalmahal to launch a host of development projects there.

If *TIME*'s naming her in their list of 100 Most Influential People In The World was a mark of her global acceptance, her refusal to attend their gala dinner in New York because of her Lalgarh commitment went on to prove that she remained the same Mamata Banerjee everybody knew—head held high up to the sky and feet firmly stuck to the ground.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

CM's Overseas Tours
Fetching Business and Glory

Since becoming the Chief Minister of West Bengal in May 2011, Mamata Banerjee has made five overseas tours so far. The occasions varied from her mission of attracting foreign investment for the state to representing the country at the canonisation of Mother Teresa, to receiving UN award on behalf of the state government but none of those was for the purpose of holidaying. And the first of these took place more than three years after her assuming the office of the executive head of the state.

SINGAPORE 2014

Armed with the exemplary development wave in the state, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee focused to position West Bengal as a global investment destination. And as a part of this sustained endeavour of hers for over three years, she left for a five-day tour to Singapore on the 17th of August.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Finance Minister Amit Mitra, a dozen top



bureaucrats of the state government and a powerful battery of the state's business leaders.

The Chief Minister, in the course of her tour, met Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and External Affairs minister K Shanmugam.

She also delivered the keynote address at the Singapore Business Summit. Describing the Singapore Business Summit as a historic occasion, she thanked the business community present there in large number for their "love and support".

The Government of West Bengal would set up a nodal office of the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation at Singapore to facilitate investments, the Chief Minister announced on the occasion.

BANGLADESH 2015

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee went to a three-day state tour to neighbouring Bangladesh in February to attend the historic *Bhasa Divas* ceremony there on the 21st. She had been invited to grace the occasion as chief guest by the Bangladesh government. This was her first visit to Bangladesh as the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The Chief Minister, in this tour, was accompanied by state's Ministers Firhad Hakim and Bratya Basu along with a team of celebrities from the field of art and culture including actors Prosenjit, Dev, Moonmoon Sen, poet Subodh Sarkar, singer and lyricist Nachiketa et al.

During the tour, which commenced on the 19th of February, the Chief Minister's first engagement was an event called *Baithaki Bangla*, which was a platform for interaction between the luminaries of both the countries from the world of literature, drama and music. The cultural fraternity of both sides of Bengal met and discussed how to strengthen cultural ties and standing relations between West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Chief Minister called this initiative as a "meeting of minds".

Speaking on the occasion, she said, "No border in the world can divide the hearts of two Bengals. Political geography has divided us, but there is no division in our minds."



She proposed a series of steps to cement the cultural bond between West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Later she tweeted: "We discussed how cultural exchanges can mutually benefit and further strengthen long standing relation between Bangladesh and West Bengal."

The next day, the Chief Minister visited the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at 32 Dhanmandi, Dhaka, where the Bangabandhu used to live.

"My visit to Bangladesh would be incomplete without visiting this iconic house," said a visibly emotional Chief Minister, adding, "Bangabandhu breathed his last in this house. The bullet marks make me sad."

Later in the evening she posted on her Facebook Page: "This evening I went to pay my homage to Banga Bandhu Memorial Museum at 32 Dhanmandi. To me, and to all of us in this subcontinent, he has been a lingering inspiration in our quest to uphold our freedom and our love for the mothertongue. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the chief architect of the independent Bangladesh. As the father of the nation, he brought due respect and glory to Bengali language from all over the world. In the memory of this great soul, I bow with reverence and respect."

And further later, right on the stroke of midnight, the West Bengal Chief Minister paid her tributes to the Dhaka Shahid Minar, the monument that's erected as a mark of homage to the martyrs who had made supreme sacrifice to uphold the dignity of the Bengali language back in 1952.

"It is one of the most memorable moments in my life to be present at Shahid Minar, I am overwhelmed and deeply touched with emotions to experience this historic moment," the West Bengal Chief Minister said.

President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Abdul Hamid, and Sheikh Hasina, respectively, were also present on the occasion.

Later, on the 21st, the Chief Minister visited Ganabhaban to attend a luncheon hosted in her honour by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, where the two leaders discussed bilateral issues. The Chief Minister also extended an invitation to the Bangladesh Prime Minister to visit West Bengal.

The Chief Minister, on the day, also addressed a business meet organised by the entrepreneurs of West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Urging both the countries to work together, the Chief Minister said, "Let us think about solutions instead of problems."

She concluded by saying, "We pray that both the Bengals keep prospering."

The Chief Minister, during her tour, also called on Bangladesh Foreign minister Mahmood Ali.

ENGLAND 2015

Accompanied by a 62-member delegation including Finance Minister Amit Mitra, three MPs from the state-Derek O'Brien, Sugato Bose and actor Deepak Adhikari (Dev), titans of industry like Y C Deveswar, Jyotsna Suri, Sanjiv Goenka, Harsh Neotia, Sanjay Budhia and Karan Paul along with business chiefs from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) as well as top state government officials and prominent personalities from the cultural world, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee landed at the Heathrow airport, London, on the 26th of July.

The Chief Minister greeted the "great nation" of Britain as she reached London on a five-day visit seeking to woo foreign investment for the state.



"Just landed in London with business delegation from Bengal. Greetings to the people of this great nation," she tweeted.

Such a tour had initially been planned a couple of years back when David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, visited Kolkata and invited the state Chief Minister to visit England to explore investment opportunities.

As many as 21 Memorandums of Understandings were signed during the course of her visit. The MoUs included academic exchange programmes between the University of Cambridge and the Presidency University, Kolkata, in the fields of Arts and Humanities and between London-based School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and Presidency for the study of

Bengali language. In the health sector, an MoU was signed between the Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Government of West Bengal, and the UK's Royal College of General Practitioners for technical support in running post-graduate diploma course on family medicine. It also included a technical collaboration for development of micro-climate controlled biodomes for 'Eco-Tourism Township' in Kolkata.

The next day, on July 27, she created history by becoming the first Chief Minister from an Indian state to get an official reception at the Buckingham Palace, the Great Britain's most iconic address. Duke of York Prince Andrew hosted an evening tea for the Chief Minister at the house of the monarch.

The West Bengal Chief Minister had a 40-minute one-on-one interaction with Prince Andrew who described her as "a very dynamic leader, leading a dynamic government, sowing the transformation of Bengal". The Prince gifted the West Bengal Chief Minister a bag with motifs of Buckingham Palace on it. The Chief Minister, as return gift, presented the Prince a hand-painted work of hers.

Commenting on this tour of hers, the Chief Minister later said, "Prince Andrew gave me a very warm reception and even came all the way out to see me off. The Prince inquired about the changing economic and political face of Bengal and our initiatives around tax collection. He has plans to work with the women of Bengal under the aegis of a few of his NGOs. I apprised him of all our women-friendly schemes like *Muktir Alo,* a plan to rehabilitate trafficked women and sex workers willing to leave the profession, and the work we've done for the transgender community."

On July 28, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee paid floral tributes at the statue of Rabindranath Tagore in Gordon Square. She gifted Kalighat *pata* paintings from Bengal to the Tagore Centre in UK. Later, she paid floral tributes at the Gandhi statue in the Parliament Square.

Later, on Day Four of her tour, the Chief Minister won the hearts of one and all at a business conclave on July 29 as she urged the corporate members of Asia House, London, to come to West Bengal for exploring investment opportunities. She asserted that the infrastructure in the state has become much business-friendly during the new regime in comparison to the past years. She also highlighted the economic advantages of West Bengal and investment opportunities in the state.

The topics discussed included infrastructure development in the state, incentives for foreign businesses to invest, the state's relationship with the union government, efforts to cut red-tapism and tackle corruption, the state's workforce and its historic ties with the United Kingdom.

"I am not from a business background, I am a street fighter. You know better, Bengal is ready for investment. Perception of Bengal has to change and is changing. That is why I am here in London to meet you," the West Bengal Chief Minister said at the meet as she received a standing ovation from the members of the Asia House who admitted that they were mesmerised by her speech.

Following the Asia House meet, prominent UK industrialist Lord Swaraj Paul called on the West Bengal Chief Minister at the hotel St James Court where she was staying during her London tour.

With Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee by his side, Lord Paul later said that his company Caparo Group might set up a compact sports car manufacturing unit in West Bengal as it has been looking forward to integrate its auto ancillary business.

"This project is currently at the research and development stage. We have entrusted British Formula One giant McLaren with its design. If all goes well, India would be the place where I plan to set up its manufacturing base," Paul said. When asked, if West Bengal would be his preferred choice, smilingly and with typical British humour and modesty Lord Paul said, "West Bengal would certainly have the first rights of refusal."

The tour was initially scheduled to continue till the 30th of the month but the Chief Minister had to opt voluntarily for an early return.

Wherever she is, in whichever country and whatever time zone, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee never loses touch with her state one bit. During her stay in London, the flood situation caused by heavy rain back home had been worsening with three of the rivers in the state flowing above the danger mark. In spite of her hectic schedule and numerous meetings in London, the Chief Minister had kept a hawk's eye over the flood situation back home and had constantly been giving instructions to the state administration as well as the special Task Force in regard to taking all kind of precautions and relief measures. But things started to get complicated with the forecast of an impending cyclone on the Bay of Bengal. The Chief Minister then didn't think twice and almost instantly decided to leave for

Kolkata cutting her tour short by a day and came back to her on the 29th, following which she would spend three sleepless nights at the state secretariat, Nabanna, personally monitoring the flood situation.

EUROPE 2016

In early September, Mamata Banerjee made her first overseas tour after her re-election as the Chief Minister of the state for the second successive term.

It was an eight-day tour of Europe that started on September 2. The principal purpose of her visit to Italy was to attend the ceremony marking the canonisation of Mother Teresa at the St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The nuns of the Missionaries of Charity and the representatives of the Archbishop of Kolkata greeted her at



the Rome airport. It was the Missionaries of Charity that had invited the Chief Minister for the occasion. Virginia Raggi, the Mayor of Rome, hosted a special reception for the Bengal Chief Minister during her stay in the city.

Late in the evening of the 5th of September, the Chief Minister arrived from Italy to Germany. Her visit to Germany was purely a business trip as she had been invited by two leading German business bodies, the BVMW and the Association of German Chambers of Commerce & Industry. The Chief Minister led a high-powered delegation including state Finance Minister Amit Mitra, MPs Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Derek O'Brien along with a bunch of noted state-based captains of industry.

Egging on the German business bigshots to "come to Bengal and invest", the Chief Minister made an impassioned plea, saying, "We will help. Give us the choice, we will give you all the options. If you want to set up industry, the state government will give land from the land bank. We are ready with our land bank and land policy. If you think about India, first think about Bengal as Bengal is the gateway to three neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. If you invest, you will get a ready market."

She came back home on the 9th.

THE NETHERLANDS 2017

This was a real glory tour made by the state Chief Minister as It was yet another feather on the cap of the West Bengal government. Kanyashree, the dream project of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, stormed the world stage at The Hague in the Netherlands. On June 23, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on behalf of the Government of West Bengal, received the United Nations Public Service Award in the category of *Reaching the Poorest and Most Vulnerable through Inclusive Services and Participation* for the Kanyashree Prakalpa at the Public Service Day celebration programme organised under the aegis of the UN. Of 552 projects selected from 62 countries, Kanyashree came first.

The award—which was handed over to the Chief Minister by the head of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) programme of the United Nations—was given in recognition of the West Bengal government's innovation and excellence in public services supporting the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The theme of the UN Public Service Forum 2017 is *The Future is Now: Accelerating Public Service Innovation for Agenda 2030*.

The Chief Minister dedicated the award to over 40 lakh girls of Bengal who have been the beneficiaries of the project.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said, "It is indeed a matter of pride that our Kanyashree project has been recognised at the highest level, by the UN."

She also spoke about the several developmental projects that have brought about a new era for public service in Bengal since May 2011.

Thanking the UN in her speech, she further said, "I think public service is service for all; and public means people—government of the people, by the people, for the people. Public service also means continuous monitoring, and providing regular service for the people."

More than 500 delegates from around the world attended the programme. Apart from



Kanyashree, the other flagship projects of West Bengal such as Sabooj Sathi, Sabooj Shree, Khadya Sathi and several others were also appreciated at the United Nations forum.

Later, on her Facebook Page, the Chief Minister wrote: "Kanyashree of Bengal now becomes Kanyashree of the world. The United Nations today, on the occasion of UN Public Service Day, awarded the United Nations Public Services first place winner award in the Category on Reaching the Poorest and Most Vulnerable through Inclusive Services and Participation, to Government of West Bengal for *Kanyashree*, out of 552 nominations from 62 countries. The prestigious award is in recognition of excellence in public service for sustainable development, innovation and our commitment to leave no one behind in the development agenda of our government. We are proud of our Kanyashree. It is indeed a historic achievement and a proud moment for the people of West Bengal and India. My best wishes to all."

Earlier, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had reached the Netherlands on June 19. A couple of days later, the Bengal Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Netherlands Football Association to facilitate exchange programmes for football players and coaches between that country and Bengal.

The Chief Minister joined the United National Convention on June 21. Sharing her experience of the day, the Chief Minister wrote on Facebook: "I am now in Netherlands along with a high powered official and business delegation. Today we had a Business Interaction organized by the Government of West Bengal in association with VNO-NCW, the largest employers' organisation in the Netherlands, supported by FICCI and KPMG. Mr Hans de Boer, President, VNO-NCW, expressed interest to bring in a delegation of Dutch companies to Bengal Global Business Summit 2018. The Ambassador of India to Netherlands also addressed the session. Noted Industrialists from Bengal spoke on their experiences of doing business in Bengal."

On June 23, the Chief Minister participated in a seminar attended by leading industrialists of the Netherlands. There she highlighted the achievements of Bengal in various fields during the last six years and invited the Dutch to invest in Bengal.

"Bengal is marching ahead. There are a lot of opportunities in the state. From the MSME sector to agriculture, Bengal is now the leading state in India on various fronts. Our government is a responsible one, and we have the goodwill to carry the state forward," the Chief Minister said in her speech on the occasion.

She also attended a programme organised by *Probashi Bangali*, a group of Bengalis residing in the Netherlands, and won the hearts of one and all present at the event.

On June 25, she returned to Kolkata.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Challenges Met
Rise in GDP despite huge debt-burden

Since May 2011, it's been the tale of an enormous effort put in by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her government to turn around a state left in ruins and stuck in stagnation during the old regime. Despite a huge loan burden of more than ₹ 2 lakh crore passed on due to the legacy of the previous regime and the present yearly debt servicing liability, which is close to a staggering ₹ 50,000 crore per annum over the coming years, with no moratorium being provided by the Centre despite repeated requests, the new government has been successfully able to carry forward the development agenda in a pro-active manner.

Besides, if the inherited debt burden was not enough, the Mamata Banerjee government also had to deal with the sudden imposition of demonetisation and hasty enforcement of GST and yet ensure financial stability of the state.

"My government is committed to the overall development and welfare of all marginal sections of the society with continuing vigour. With the economy having barely recovered from the effects of demonetisation, it was faced with a fresh challenge midway through the year when Goods and Services Tax was hastily enforced all across the country. Manufacturers, suppliers, traders as well as consumers faced difficulties in switching over to the new GST regime from the existing system. In spite of the same, my government has succeeded in taking the unprecedented twin challenges of demonetisation and introduction of GST in its stride."

With these words, state Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi inaugurated the last Budget session of the Assembly on January 13, 2018.

Not that the state's financial stability was merely ensured. "Despite the adverse effects of demonetisation and hasty implementation of GST on the economy, performance of our state in financial sector during 2017-18 has significantly improved due to our focused and persistent approach," wrote the Chief Minister in her Facebook post right after the 2017-18 financial year was over.

Plan Expenditure of the state, as the last



state Budget reveals, has grown by 16.5% as against the target of 11%, from ₹ 49,609 crore of 2016-17 to ₹ 57,778.60 crore in 2017-18. This is five times the total plan expenditure of ₹ 11, 837.85 crore in 2010-11.

Capital Expenditure has witnessed a growth of nearly 59% from ₹ 12,028.50 crore in 2016-17 to a record ₹ 19,084.70 crore in 2017-18. The total capital expenditure in 2010-11 was ₹ 2,225.75 crore. Thus, the total capital expenditure in 2017-18 is 8.5 times as compared to 2010-11.

There has been a significant increase in the state's own tax collection. The tax collection in 2017-18 has gone up to ₹ 52,971 crore as compared to ₹ 45,647 crore in 2016-17, a gross increase of ₹ 7,300 crore. This figure was only ₹ 21,500 crore in 2010-11.

The annual income of farmers in the state has increased from ₹ 91,000 to ₹ 2.39 lakh in last six years. The total potato production in the state has gone up 40% to 129 lakh tonne in last five years.

The gross state domestic product that indicates the growth of the economy of that state has also doubled since 2010-11. While it was around ₹ 4.5 lakh crore in 2010-11, now it is over ₹ 10,48,678 crore. This is estimated to be 15% higher than the estimate for 2017-18.

West Bengal's GDP growth has surpassed those of states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. Several macroeconomic indicators have showed that the state has been able to pull itself up compared to other states.

According to central government figures, the rate of growth of GDP in Maharashtra being 5.66%, that of Rajasthan being 5.75%, Uttar Pradesh being 6%, Telengana being 5.35%, Karnataka being 7.05% and Punjab being 5.32%, West Bengal registered a growth of 8%.

The state has also surged in terms of industrial growth. While Karnataka has a growth rate of 4.36%, 4.01% in Maharashtra, 2.02% in Punjab, 3% in Rajasthan and 3.64% in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal registered an industrial growth rate of 5.05%. All these are no mean achievements for a debt-stressed state.

Total expenditure for 2018-19 is estimated to be ₹ 1,95,829 crore, a 5.2% increase over the revised estimate of 2017-18. In 2017-18, there was an increase of ₹ 3,701 crore (2%) of expenditure in the revised estimate over the Budget estimate.

Total receipts (excluding borrowings) for 2018-19 are estimated to be ₹ 1,48,834 crore,



an increase of 3.3% as compared to the revised estimates of 2017-18. In 2017-18, total receipts exceeded the budgeted estimate by ₹ 10,667 crore.

Zero revenue deficit has been estimated for the 2018-19 financial year. Fiscal deficit is targeted at ₹ 23,805 crore (2.2% of state GDP).

In a letter to state Chief Secretary Malay Kumar De, dated April 13, 2018, union Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia congratulated the state government for its performance in terms of bringing down the revenue gap in SGST collection and even taking it up to revenue surplus.

Pointing out that the overall revenue gap in SGST collection for the whole country has come down from 28.3% in July 2017 to 17.9% in March 2018, Adhia wrote in his letter, "As far as West Bengal is concerned, the revenue gap has come down from 33.4% in August [2017] to (-)3% in March 2018. The revenue shortfall in West Bengal has been coming down steadily but there seems to have been a spike of a major gain in March [2018] where suddenly your revenue deficit has now become revenue surplus."

The state government has also taken up construction of infrastructural assets to the tune of ₹ 12,000 crore, which will come up in the next 3-4 years and will give a huge boost to the economy of the state as well as the country.

In the industry front, ₹ 2.19 lakh crore of investment proposals signed in the last Bengal Global Business Summit in 2018. In the previous BGBS over ₹ 2.30 lakh crore worth of investment proposals had been signed and some of them are already under implementation.

All this has been possible due to the state government's consistent and close monitoring and holding more than 400 Administrative Review Meetings and Public Distribution Programmes at state, district and block levels.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Demonetisation CM stood firm

One move that has taken the country backwards by twenty years. This is how Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee described demonetisation at a joint press conference with Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi at New Delhi's Constitution Club on December 27 last. "This policy of demonetisation, unprecedented of its kind since Independence, that too implemented without any planning, has left the country's economy as completely shattered," she said.

It may be recalled that on the 8th of November, the union government demonetised the ₹ 500 and ₹ 1000 currency notes, which threw the country into financial crisis. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was the very first to have reacted strongly against this move of demonetisation instantly, and tweeted urging the union government to "withdraw this draconian decision" expressing her deep concern for the "common people" and the "small traders" as to how they would buy the essentials commodities from the next day.

"This is a financial chaos and disaster let loose on the common people of India," she wrote on her Twitter page, backing it up with another equally bold tweet the next day, which read, "Please save people from this disaster. Roads are closed, markets are shut, patients are not being admitted to private hospitals, millions are affected. Chaos everywhere. This is like an all-India unannounced strike. Those who hoard large amounts of black money will be protected. The poorest of the poor and middle class are crying. I once more appeal to the (union) government to withdraw this hasty decision. First do a plan of action and only then do proper implementation. This is a complete disaster."

Raising her pitch further, the Chief Minister described the move of demonetisation as a "financial anarchy" and urged all the right-thinking forces to unite against this. She also shared on her Twitter page an example of how the demonetisation affected the marginalised section of the population, saying, "There are millions of real stories across cities, towns, villages about #NoteBan affecting the marginalised. Here is only one example. Tea garden owners have expressed difficulty to pay wages on time. This could lead to frustration among poor workers, most of whom are tribals." What should there destiny be, she asked, "Desperation? Starvation?"

Having observed that only the money launderers are actually profiting due to the "black decision" of demonetisation, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she was ready to





share platform and work unitedly with all the political forces cutting across ideologies "to save the country" from the fallouts of demonetisation.

"I personally visited several banks today to listen to the tales of hardship of the common people. More than two lakh ATMs are closed, money is not available, people are facing lot of problems," said she.

In a bid to check the hike in prices of essential goods due to demonetisation of higher denomination currency notes, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee almost immediately announced that no agricultural tax would be imposed on the entry of trucks to Bengal from other states for the next three days. The decision was taken so that vegetables and other essential items loaded in trucks, which are stuck at different border entry points for failing to pay the tax, do not perish. The supply of essential goods is likely to fall if trucks remain stranded at the borders for next few days.

The Chief Minister, in this connection, stated: "Thousands of trucks carrying vegetables and other essential products are stuck at different state borders because they cannot pay toll tax, facing huge cash shortage crisis. This issue will become even more serious and push essential prices up beyond control. Quick action is needed. To save farmers and commoners, perishable vegetables should not be allowed to rot."

Reports on trucks loaded with goods, including perishable ones, stranded at borders led to panic among traders in the state. They apprehended a hike in price of essential goods due to short supply as the trucks were not able to enter the state without paying the tax. At the same time, goods like fishes and vegetables worth crores of rupees were perishing in the trucks itself. It would leave a deep impact on the market.

The shortfall in the supply of essential goods would lead to inconvenience to the people as on the one hand they do not have the required money while on the other the prices of essential goods may go up.

The truck owners and traders in the state heaved a sigh of relief with the Chief Minister's announcement on exemption of agricultural tax. They felt that the decision was crucial and timely or they had to stop bringing in goods from other states.

On the 16th of November, the state Chief Minister called on President Pranab Mukherjee at the national capital and submitted to him a memorandum protesting against demonetisation. Later, talking to the media, she lamented, "The Centre has not thought about thousands of villages where there are no post offices and banks," adding, "Four out of five villages in India don't have a bank."

Describing the situation as "very grave", she elaborated, "In a year, the three months from December to February are the most fruitful time for construction and development projects. But now everything is shut, and progress is halted. The tea garden and jute mill workers are not receiving their salary and are in distress. The transport sector too has been badly hit."

In a space of just over a week, on November 24, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again met President Pranab Mukherjee at the Rastrapati Bhavan and apprised him about the "critical" condition prevailing in the country. She was accompanied by several opposition leaders.

After the visit, the state Chief Minister said, "We told him (the President) about the situation of labourers in the country. In our state, paddy labourers are not getting salary. Many shopkeepers, traders, even salaried employees, are not getting money. We cannot access the money lying in our accounts."

Apart from visiting the President as well as several like-minded political leaders from all over the country, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also took to the streets in leading the protest endeavours against demonetisation. On November 28, she led a rally of lakhs of people in Kolkata. At the conclusion of the march, which started from College Street and finished at Dorina Crossing, she gave a speech that received a vociferous applause from the huge gathering.

"Every decision needs planning, instead demonetisation has been totally unplanned and done in haste," she said.

"Daily life has been hampered severely. This is a people's movement, not a political movement," she asserted.

Following the Kolkata rally, she addressed two other public rallies in two days, both outside Bengal, one in Lucknow on the 29th and another in Patna on the 30th, thus emerging as the most prominent leader in the nationwide campaign against demonetisation.

"After 60 years of independence, people's independence has been taken away by force," Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said at the rallies, adding, "It is the responsibility of a government to work for the welfare of the people, not to cause suffering for them. Does the Centre think that workers, labourers and housewives have black money? I strongly object to this kind of concept".

Harping on the fact that many noted economists had already criticised this move, the Chief Minister said, "Several eminent economists said demonetisation is a bad move. From Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen to the World Bank economists to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is also an acclaimed economist in his own right, have criticised the move. The country's economy has slowed down. Industrial production has slowed down. The earnings of the farmers and the labourers have been snatched away."

Echoing the Chief Minister's voice of criticism, state Finance Minister Amit Mitra too expressed his views of objection to the decision of demonetisation. Taking stock of the situation after a month of the imposition of notes ban, the Finance Minister observed that India could lose as much as ₹ 4.7 lakh crore in its GDP.

"Ever since the demonetisation of old high denomination notes has been in force," the Finance Minister said, "long queues are being witnessed at bank branches and outside ATMs for cash withdrawal. Just imagine for ₹ 400 crore of supposedly fake money, according to the government itself, you kill or demonetise over ₹ 14.5 lakh crore or may be ₹ 15 lakh crore. I mean what kind of policy is this? Another serious question, we recently saw some new fake money, I am told according to reports. What does this mean? This is horrendous."

Calling demonetisation "the biggest scam that is about to happen", Mitra further said, "It will provide no gain, but only acute pain. If these figures (deposits of old notes in banks) are right because what it seems to me is if all the money comes back there was not enough black money. This has two serious implications. One, it could be that the government was purely ignorant because it does not consult anybody or they have in effect facilitated some people from converting black into white, effectively ending up with no RBI surpluses."

Mitra also slammed the Centre for trying to enforce cashless economy without preparing grounds for it.

"Don't they know 86% people have no means to go to cashless economy? In our country 92% villages are unbanked as per RBI figures. There are 21000 unorganised mandis in the country, 383 lakh unorganised units in MSME, which obviously use cash. A major part of any big economy is in cash. To move them into cashless economy is a major task. This cannot be done by destabilising the economy."

The Bengal Finance Minister, who is also the Chairman of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on GST, further opined, "The whole tax architecture will have to change, which is a huge challenge in the form of destabilisation. Can we not move GST a little bit on so that when the economy stabilises and people come back to normal living conditions, you bring in another disruption?"

Meanwhile, under the instruction of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on December 5, the

Bengal Agriculture Minister and the Agriculture Marketing Minister visited several wholesale and retail markets in Kolkata to assess the situation with flow of money yet to improve since the demonetisation started. They were also accompanied by the local MLAs.

The Ministers spoke to both the farmers who come to the markets from different villages to sell their produce and wholesale traders who import onions and potatoes from other states.

The state Agriculture Minister, after the visit, said, "I spoke to an onion wholesaler who procured the vegetable from South India. He said that his per day sale was around 100 kg and now it has gone down to 40 kg. I found stock of comparatively bigger size onions in Koley Market. These onions would perish if not sold within the next few days. The traders would incur huge loss if they cannot clear the stock. Still the price of vegetables are under control, but I apprehend price rise if the situation doesn't improve soon."

Pointing out that the visit was "essential to know the real picture", the Minister summed up saying, "We will submit the report of our inspection visit to the Chief Minister and steps will be taken accordingly to reduce the suffering of the farmers."

Later, while taking stock of the government departments at a meeting, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Our state suffered a ₹ 5,500-crore revenue loss. A total of 1.70 crore people have been hit hard, with 81.5 lakh losing their jobs.

The Chief Minister feared that worse is in store for the state. "What you are seeing now isn't the bottom of the crisis. The worst is yet to happen. How long can industries operate without funds? They are running out of working capital. People have money in banks but they can't withdraw it. The farmers, bidi workers, tea plantation workers, those working in the jute mills, artisans, weavers and jewellery makers are the worst hit. The Centre had promised ₹ 2,500 crore to cooperative banks. But they have only got ₹ 300 crore. The cash crunch has taken a toll on Rabi crops and potato farming too," she said, adding that the slump in farming would lead to a spike in commodity prices in the near future, and the country would be heading towards famine.

On the 15th of December, state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote a letter to Urjit Patel, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, making him aware of the ground reality of the people's plight as an aftermath of the union government's move of demonetisation.

She wrote:

"Dear Mr Patel,

The whole country is going through an unprecedented misery and suffering due to the cruel misadventure of demonetisation which has not been seen in any modern democracy. You are perhaps aware that already five crore of workers across the country and across the sectors are facing unemployment and hunger. Unorganised sector of the country, which provides two-thirds jobs in the country, has literally collapsed. The small and medium enterprises are shutting down shops in lakhs. The massive trading sector of the economy has been brought down to its knees due to cash crunch, unable to conduct its business. Shops and establishments are suffering from no sale and no revenues. The farmers of our nation are going through a trauma never seen before and that too not due to natural calamity but due to a man-made disaster of massive demonetisation. Even the middle and larger industries have dropped their production by at least 50%.

The tea workers of West Bengal are dying due to non-payment of wages over a fortnight. The jute workers of our state have lost their jobs and going back to their villages with nothing in their hands but hunger.

Agriculture, food sector, vegetable sector, small traders to shopkeepers, small vendors to 100-day MNREGA workers, small scale to big industry, unorganised to IT sector, it is everywhere, the common people across the board are deeply suffering. All development works have also come to standstill due to cash crunch. You also know that plastic card is not full-proof and 92% of the villages in the country have no banks.

Every major economist including Nobel Laureates have come out strongly against demonetisation, cutting across theoretical leanings.

You are aware that the economy is getting derailed and growth rates of GDP are being revised downwards every other day.

As the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, an autonomous institution with a great history, which issues currencies to the nation, we expect you to stand up against this demonetisation onslaught against the common people of the nation at this moment of crisis, rather than falling silent and remaining opaque.

We would also like to know from you the nature of allocation of new currency to each of the states in a spirit of transparency and

accountability, since there are serious concerns of political discrimination amongst states.

Our government is enclosing a pointed memorandum of specific problems which need to be addressed immediately by the RBI in our state for the sake of people cutting across all nomenclatures of work and incomes."

The Chief Minister, along with her letter, also enclosed a separate memorandum of the Government of West Bengal to the RBI Governor, the text of which reads:

1 Severe Cash Crunch of Currency of Smaller Denomination

(i) The supply of new denomination of ₹ 500 was started in the state only after four weeks from the date of announcement of demonetisation and that too in woefully inadequate quantity. Still the banks and ATMs across the state are mainly dispensing ₹ 2000 and are virtually starved of ₹ 500 and ₹ 100 notes. This has brought the trade and businesses and other transactions to a virtual halt as lower denominations are the main medium of exchange. Adequate quantities of currency of smaller denominations, especially ₹ 500 and ₹ 100, should be urgently made available in the state.

(ii) Even after more than a month since the announcement of demonetisation, RBI has not devised any MIS for information sharing with the state government. The state government is totally in dark about the availability of currency in different denominations in different parts of the state.

(iii) There is also no information about the supply of currency to different states. The state government has every reason to believe that there is discrimination in the distribution of currency between the states.

2 Agriculture Sector in Severe Stress

- No cash for Kharif crop purchase
- No cash for potato seed purchase
- No cash for Rabi crop inputs purchase

The main source of credit for rural sector, the Cooperative Banks, are being starved of cash:

(i) The cooperative sector has been very badly hit. As against the total requisition of ₹ 2903 crore, the State Cooperative Bank has till date received only ₹ 565 crore. This shortfall in currency in the cooperative sector has severely affected agriculture and agricultural credit. It may be mentioned that cooperative banks cater to more than 30% of the total rural credit in the state. In the backward districts of the state, where the formal banking sector is inadequate, the share of cooperative credit is 50-60% of the total rural credit.

(ii) RBI has in its directive dated November 14, 2016, prohibited the District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) from exchanging specified bank notes (SBN) and also accepting deposit of such notes (₹ 500 and ₹ 1000). It has also prohibited DCCBs from depositing the old currency with the RBI. As a result, a huge amount of ₹ 291 crore in SBNs is lying with the Cooperative Banks which are not being accepted by the authorised banks/chests. This has led to a crisis rendering the farmers unable to either get or repay loans and depositors to deposit SBNs into their valid accounts. This order of the RBI should be immediately revoked to provide relief to the farming community.

3 MSME, Unorganised and Informal Sectors are Collapsing

(i) MSME sector has been very badly affected. Sectors like leather, garments, handloom, zari, handicraft, jewellery under MSME sector, are dependent on cash for a) procurement of raw materials, b) payment of daily wages, c) sale in local market. All these three are severely affected for lack of cash. More than 15 lakh people involved in these sectors are passing through severe hardship.

(ii) Bengal has been a traditional source for hiring skilled workers in these sectors all over India. Since the SME units all across the country are working at reduced levels or have shut down, these workers (more than 2 lakh) are coming back to Bengal and becoming jobless.

4 Dislocation of Payment of Wages to the Tea Workers: A case of Discrimination

(i) There has been a severe dislocation in the payment of wages to tea garden workers where there is hardly any presence of banking services as these are in far-flung hilly and terai regions in north Bengal. The Assam model (payment through District Magistrates), which was adopted to facilitate wage payment, was discontinued in West Bengal by the RBI whereas it is still continuing in Assam. This is a case of grave discrimination of the state by the RBI.

(ii) The problem of non-payment of wages to tea workers is still very severe in West Bengal should be allowed to follow the Assam model as it ensures delivery of cash for wages payment at the offices of the tea estates. In the peak period, the existing arrangement, which is allowed only

for two fortnights, should at least be continued till March 31, 2017.

(iii) The RBI has allowed withdrawal of money for payment of wages on the basis of a formula which is "limited to area in hectares × 2.5 × ₹ 1400 per fortnight". The amount does not cover full wages and other requirements such as cash disbursement for medical expenditure for patients referred for outside treatment covering clinical tests, doctor fees, hospital diet etc. The banks should allow the tea management to withdraw as per their actual requirement. They may put in place necessary checks and balances to prevent misuse of the system by the tea management.



(iv) Workers have been agitating in several gardens demanding arrangement of disbursement of wages in tea estates as banks are located far away. It is requested that till the required infrastructure of installation of ATMs/Micro-ATMs or CSP/business correspondent is put in place, banks should make available the cash for wage payment at the tea estates.

In the meantime, RBI should ensure that the gaps in banking services in these areas in the form of presence of bank branches, ATMs/Micro-ATMs, CSP, business correspondents (BCs) is established.

5 Inadequate Banking Network/Services in the State

(i) Out of 37,468 villages in the state, only less than 10%, ie, 3,570 villages have bank branches.

(ii) Out of 3,354 Gram Panchayats in the state, 717 Gram Panchayats are unbanked and do not have any bank branch. Our efforts in the last five and a half years to open at least one Brick and Mortar branch in these Gram Panchayats have not yielded desired results. The state government on its part offered all support and assistance to the banks to open branches in the unbanked Gram Panchayats. Office space at a nominal annual rent of 1 was offered in the Gram Panchayat buildings. RBI should take necessary steps to have a bank branch in all the unbanked Gram Panchayats of the state.

A year later

On the eve of the November 8, the day on which, a year ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a televised speech to the nation, imposed ban on the erstwhile 1000 and 5000 rupee notes, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to the social media and termed demonetisation as a "big scam" and demanded "a thorough investigation" of the process if the black money had thus been converted into white money for vested interests.

Reiterating on her Facebook Page that demonetisation has caused "unparalleled damage" to the country and its economy, the state Chief Minister wrote, "Black money became 'white fund' for them and the country was plunged into darkness. No black money could yet be brought out from the foreign accounts. In all practical sense, it yielded big, big zero."

Observing that demonetisation could combat neither terrorism nor black money, she wrote, "By the devil act of demonetisation, the country has already lost its GDP worth nearly ₹ 3 lakh crore. Crores of workers, particularly in the informal sector, lost their jobs. Farmers were left to starve. Over 100 people lost their lives."

She further wrote in her post, "People had no access to their own money in banks, even in emergency. The memories of untold sufferings and pain thrust upon the common people still haunt our minds. From Day 1, I had protested against this draconian decision of demonetisation

by the central government and requested for its immediate withdrawal."

She also shared statistics of how the Indian economy has been ruined. "The GDP fell to 6.1% growth in between January and March 2017, compared to 9.1% in the previous year. It further plummeted to 5.7% between April and June 2017, compared to 7.9% in the previous year," she pointed out.

"More than 75,000 industrialists were compelled to leave India and settle abroad and become NRIs because of harassment in the prevailing situation. Business potential worth lakhs and lakhs of crore in India was thus lost," the Chief Minister added.

Drawing a contrast with the union government, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee upheld the state government's view in this regard, saying, "We are for all the people who suffered and still continue to suffer. Their fight is our fight and we are committed to stand by them."

It may be mentioned in this context that in a bid to ameliorate the condition of the people, especially from the unorganised sector, who had lost their jobs as a result of the implementation of the policy of demonetisation and had thus returned to Bengal, the state government had, in course of presentation of the State Budget 2017-18 earlier this year, announced a special scheme called Samarthan, under which a one-time grant of ₹ 50,000 has been given to each of 50,000 such workers to start their own business so that they can earn their livelihood. The gazette notification for the scheme was published on February 23 last.

Any labourer or worker who is a permanent resident of Bengal, working in other states, and was compelled to return to Bengal after November 8, 2016 due to loss of job in that state, was eligible to avail of the scheme subject to the conditions:

(i) The worker/ labourer is a breadwinner of the family;

(ii) The Block Development Officer (BDO) in consultation with local police administration certifies that the applicant was actually working outside Bengal and has returned to the state after November 8, 2016 due to loss of job;

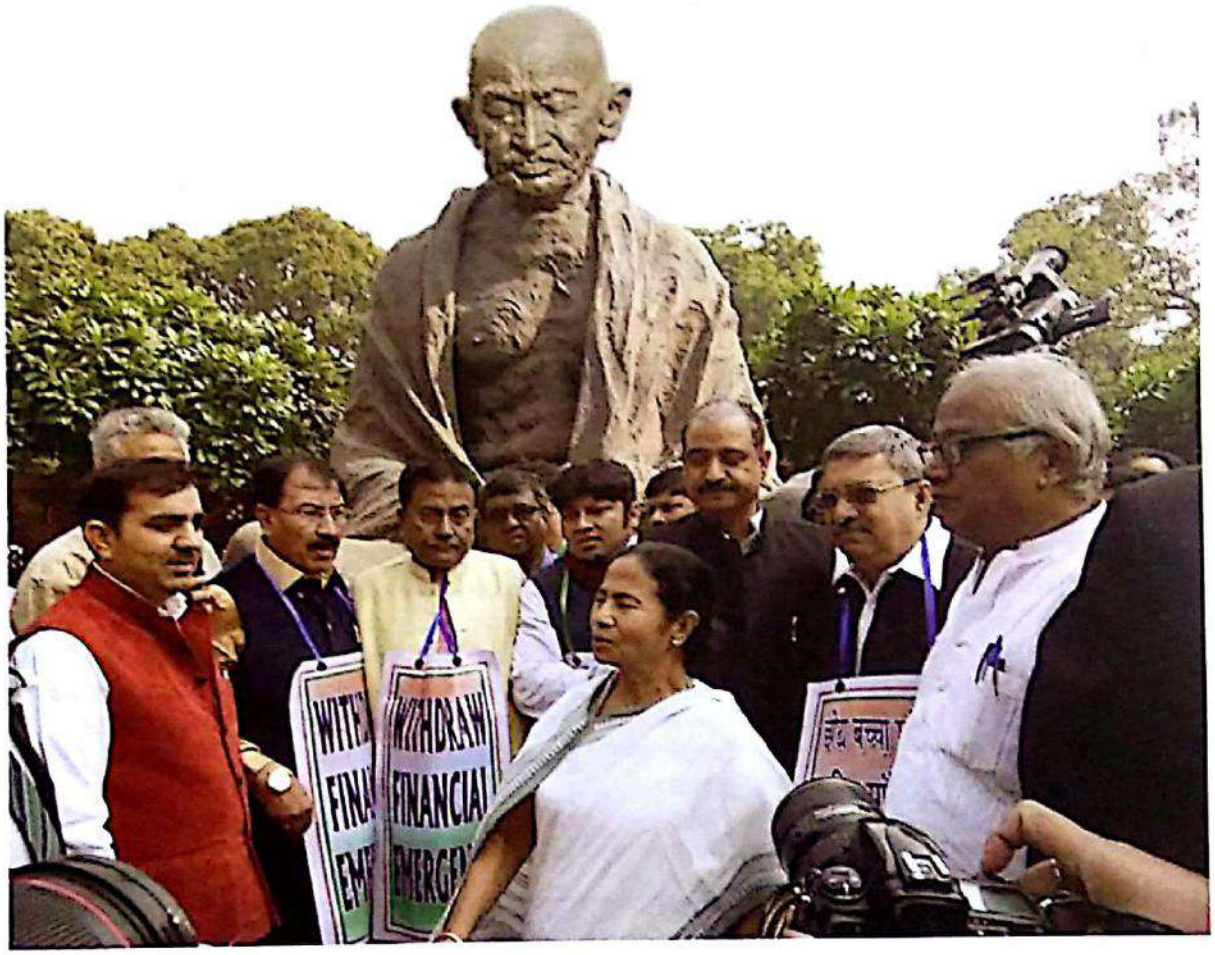
(iii) The applicant must have an electoral photo-identity card (EPIC) to prove permanent residency in Bengal;

(iv) The applicant must submit a copy of the passbook of any savings account held in a post office, scheduled commercial bank, cooperative bank, regional rural bank, etc., providing the account details where the grant will be credited online.

The state Labour Department is the nodal department for the implementation, monitoring and supervision of the scheme.

Summing up what state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Finance Minister Amit Mitra have observed on demonetisation on different occasions, it can be said that the union government's noteban policy has been proved, over the course of the past one year, to be a complete disaster for the Indian economy, for which getting back again on feet has become a herculean task. Many people lost their lives, and lakhs lost their jobs. Businesses in both the formal and informal sectors have been devastated. The purported aim of demonetisation, of recovering black money, has been proved to be an empty boast. The Reserved Bank of India (RBI) has stated that 99 per cent of the demonetised ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 currency notes, which formed an overwhelming 86 per cent of the paper currency on circulation, has come back into the economy, yet no black money has been traced. The ways demonetisation has affected the economy can be streamlined as:

- Demonetisation failed all four stated objectives: curbing black money, corruption, terrorism and fake currency.
- 99 per cent of demonetised currency came back to banks; so where did the black money go?
- India is neither the fastest-growing economy in South Asia nor the fastest growing large economy in the world any more.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) slashed India's 2017-18 economic growth forecast by 50 basis points to 6.7 per cent.
- Further, IMF cut India's growth forecast for the next year, i.e., 2018-19, by 30 basis points to 7.4 per cent.
- India's GDP growth slowed down to 5.7 per cent in April-June. It was 7.1 per cent during the same period a year ago.
- Bank credit growth to large industries contracted by 1.7 per cent and to medium companies by 4.1 per cent this year.
- Only 448 new industrial and infrastructural projects were announced during the first quarter of 2017-18, the lowest since June 2014.
- The value of stalled infrastructure projects in the quarter ended September 2017 increased



to ₹ 13.22 lakh crore. That is the fifth straight quarter of increase.

- Agricultural growth in April-June 2017 declined to 2.3 per cent from 5.2 per cent in January-March 2017.
- Gross fixed capital formation, a measure of private investment in the economy, grew by just 1.16 per cent during the April-June quarter compared to 7.39 per cent in the same period in 2016.
- The Business Confidence Index (BCI) of the services sector fell by 5.3 per cent between April-July 2017.
- The BCI of the capital goods and consumer nondurables sectors declined by 13.5 per cent and 10.3 per cent, respectively, between April -July 2017.
- Fiscal deficit at July-end touched 92.4 per cent of the budget. The deficit figure for the same period of 2016-17 was 73.7 per cent of the target.
- Incremental bank credit in the current fiscal year is declining. It is now less by ₹ 1.37 lakh crore from last year's figure during the corresponding period of April to August: it is a negative growth of 1.8 per cent, which is a historical record.
- In urban India, unemployment was 8.2 per cent in the week ended October 8. This is the highest unemployment rate in urban India in the past 11 months.
- Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Consumer Confidence Survey showed that the Current Situation Index was in the pessimistic zone, reflecting the deterioration in the employment scenario, price level and income.
- Households' current perceptions on the general economic situation remained in the pessimistic zone for four successive quarters.
- More than 150 people died due to demonetisation.
- Unemployment increased to 7 per cent in the weeks following demonetisation: 25 crore daily wage workers lost employment.
- In the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector there was a 50 per cent decline in revenue and 35 per cent of job loss.
- If demonetisation was a surgical strike, the victim was the Indian economy.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Bengal Global Business Summit

A landmark addition to the state calendar

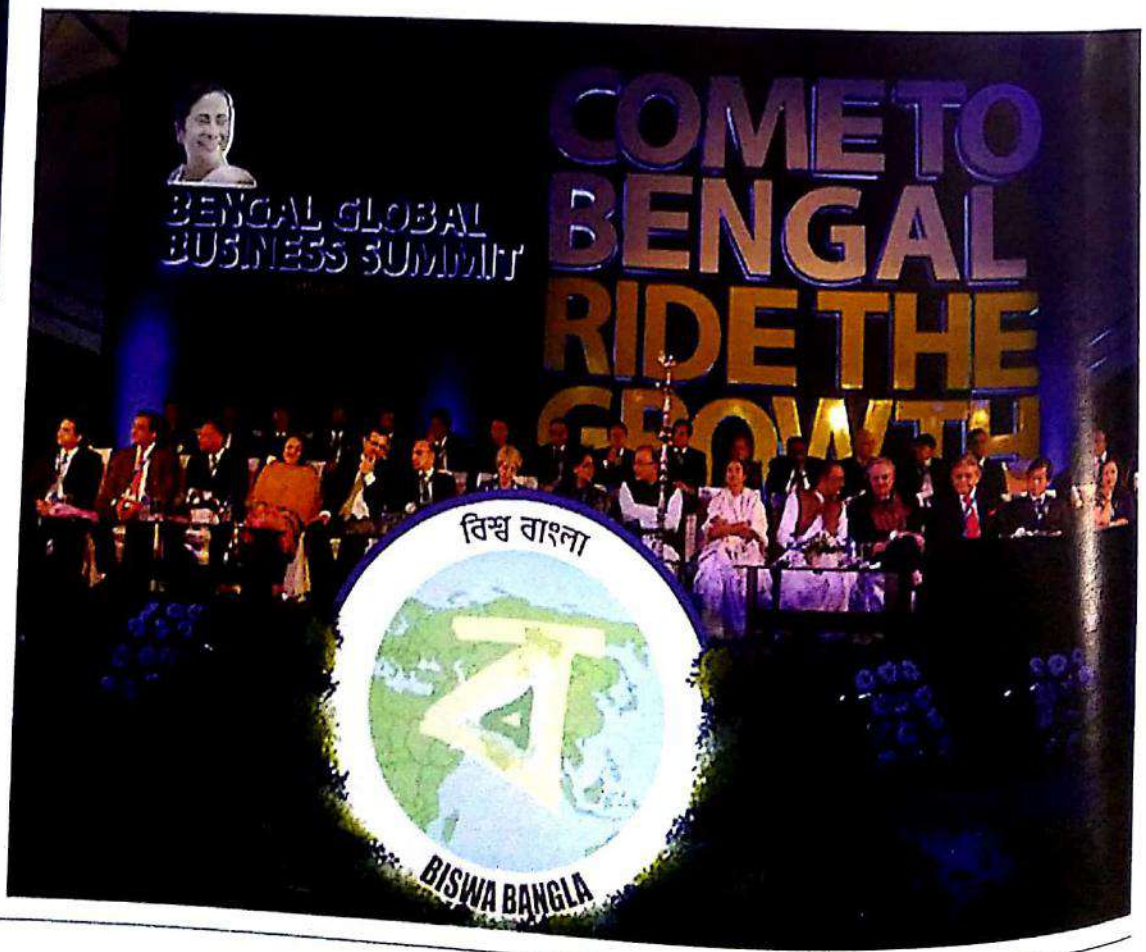
Being a key state in India for several reasons, it's only make sense that West Bengal would play a key role in the industrial growth of the country as well. Realising this, and of course in a bid to rejuvenate the industrial scenario in the state, the new government under the leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had since its inception in May 2011 been taking up a number of initiatives and making various policy measures to guarantee incentives for the overall socio-economic development of the state's economy.

And well, the efforts, one must say, have not gone in vain.

To carry the good work forward, also to hasten up the pace thereof, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in the year 2015, instructed to start holding a two-day annual event called the Bengal Global Business Summit in Kolkata

BGBS 2015

The first edition of the summit was organised on the 7th and the 8th of January 2015, where the



entrepreneurs from home and abroad shared their thoughts and experiences with each other.

Apart from the captains of Indian industry, delegates from 20-odd countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Luxembourg and Australia, took part in the summit. While the United Kingdom delegation was led by former British minister and chairperson of the UK-India Business Council (UKIBC), Patricia Hewitt, the Japanese delegation included officials from Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the chief executive officer of the Mitsubishi Chemicals, Hiroaki Ishizuka. Similarly, South Korea was represented by the director of the Korean Trade Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), F H Kim. The global senior vice-president of the Samsung Electronics and top officials of Doshan, too, were part of Korean delegation.

After having got off to a start on such a positive note, the morning session of Day I saw as many as 14 Indian industry bigwigs hailing the West Bengal government for its enterprising endeavours while in the afternoon session, 10 overseas delegates joined in and praised the remarkable growth of Bengal in the last couple of years as they saw it.

Another highlight of the Day I of the summit was the announcement of the central projects worth ₹ 21000 crore in the state by union Urban Development minister Nitin Gadkari. The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a central public sector undertaking, also announced projects worth ₹ 40000 crore.

In other new investments that came the state's way in the first day, MoUs worth ₹ 41,600 crore were signed between the state and the union Shipping ministry. That included a deep sea port at Sagar Islands, with investment of ₹ 12,000 crore (US$ 2 billion). Another sum of ₹ 1200 crore will be invested in the development of a second port in Haldia. The Haldia-Varanasi waterway development project will also attract investment to the tune of ₹ 4,500 crore. Besides, MoU on Deocha Pachami Coal Mines was signed, which would bring investment worth ₹ 12000 crore. The Mitsubishi Chemicals committed fresh investments in the Haldia plant. GoAir, with an investment of ₹ 1000 crore, intended to start operation from the Nazrul Islam Airport at Andal. Fresh investment by ITC to the tune of ₹ 3000 crore was announced. A massive hydrocarbon gas project is also coming up, with investment worth ₹ 5000 crore from Hiranandani group. The ₹ 300 crore Kolkata Eye MoU was signed with the Port Trust.

Like the first day of the summit, investment proposals poured in on Day II as well.

In the power sector, the NTPC is going to be investing ₹ 20,000 crore. In the health sector, MoUs worth ₹ 2710 crore were signed, which would generate 8990 employment and would provide skill development to 90,000 people per annum while 16 MoUs were signed in the food processing sector with investment amounting more than ₹ 1000 crore. The BAPL signed an MoU with the Malaysian company Scomi involving investment to the tune of ₹ 1000 crore. The Government of West Bengal has in fact been working with the BAPL in installing the air connectivity between Kolkata, Durgapur, Coochbehar and Bagdogra. The BAPL is also entering into an agreement with GoAir and Pinnacle Air.

The total investment proposals received for the urban development sector was about ₹ 70,000 crore. Five new townships, it was learnt, would be created in Bolpur, Siliguri, Kalyani, Rajarhat and Baruipur. The Subarna group of Singapore will build up a growth corridor from Kolkata to Raghunathpur via Dhanbad, for which the proposed investment amount has been ₹ 1000 crore.

Other significant investment agreements in urban area include: ₹ 1500 crore from Y K Modi Group, ₹ 1275 crore on 150 acre land by Solarpuria Group, ₹ 4000 crore on 235 acre land at Rajarhat by Forum Group, ₹ 6000 crore on 135 acre land in North 24 Parganas by Highland Group, ₹ 9000 crore on 100 acre land at Bishnupur by Ambuja Neotia Group, ₹ 1200 crore from Mayfair Group, ₹ 2500 crore on 138 acre land at Baruipur by Mani Group, ₹ 2024 crore investment in Sports and Leather Complex from FS Group, ₹ 260 crore on 60 acre land by Swarnaganga Realities, ₹ 4000 crore on 50 acre land by Sherwood Group, ₹ 700 crore on 57 acre land by MTEK Group, ₹ 1000 crore on 60 acre land by Merlin Group, ₹ 1200 crore on 50 acre land in South 24 Parganas by Dhoot Group, ₹ 25000 crore on 600 acre land at Rajarhat by Greentech Group, ₹ 5000 crore for an IT hub at Rajarhat and ₹ 1000 crore for another IT hub in Howrha—both by Infinity, ₹ 2000 crore to be invested by the Unimart Group, ₹ 1500 crore in building a Textile Park by the Panchwati Group, ₹ 1000 crore on building a gateway in Sundarban by the South City Group, ₹ 3000 crore in three projects

by the Siddha Group, ₹ 1055 crore investment on 100 acre land by the Premier Group, ₹ 2500 crore from Capital Singapore, ₹ 1000 crore from Regent Garment, ₹ 2500 crore from Jalan Group, ₹ 1200 crore from INPA Group, ₹ 1200 crore for a hosiery park and ₹ 15,000 crore for the *Smart City* projects.

So, at the end of the day, there were many positive takeaways from the two-day Bengal Global Business Summit 2015. While the proposed investment of a mind-boggling ₹ 2.43 lakh crore was definitely the high point, another significant and positive outcome of the summit was that investments were not only sought and received for brick-and-mortar industries but for the crucial human resource development sector as well.

BGBS 2016

BGBS 2016, the second edition of the event was marked by participation from 26 countries including USA, UK, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, China, Korea, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Canada, Netherlands, Malaysia, UAE, Singapore, Belgium, Thailand, Bulgaria, Romania, Chile, Czech Republic, Mexico, Finland, Tunisia, Argentina and earned ₹ 2,50,253.74 crore worth of business announcements, business document exchanges, expressions of interest and investment proposals received from varied sectors such as Manufacturing, Infrastructure & Mining, Urban Development, Power & Renewab Energy, IT, ITES & Telecom, Transport, Tourism Food Processing & Fisheries, Technical Educatio & Training and Small & Medium Industries.

Overseas dignitaries who addressed the summit included Tshering Tobgay, Prime Ministe of Bhutan, Tofail Ahmed, Minister of Commerce, Bangladesh and Priti Patel, Minister of State for Employment, United Kingdom.

Major announcements and investment proposals/MoUs/EOIs that took place during the course of the summit included TCG Refinery, Jindal Group, H-Energy, Essel Group, Zhongtong Bus Holding, Great Eastern Energy, Kawasaki Rikuso, BAPL, Ambuja Neotia, ITC, Airtel, Titagar Towers, etc while Chief Minister Mamata Banerje released, inter alia, the Export Strategy Paper for West Bengal prepared by EXIM Bank, New Township Policy, Design Policy 2016, Start-Up Policy 2016-2021.

Sector-wise investment breakup of BGBS 2016:

Manufacturing and infrastructure





development – ₹ 1,16,958 crore
Power – ₹ 8462 crore
Animal Research Development – ₹ 45 crore
Fisheries – ₹ 115 crore
Transport – ₹ 9384 crore
Tourism – ₹ 450 crore
Food Processing – ₹ 230 crore
Urban Development – ₹ 29,000 crore (Ambuja Township near Baruipur and 16 other townships)
Higher Education – ₹ 2150 crore
MSME – ₹ 50,000 crore
Healthcare – ₹ 1360 crore
Technical Education – ₹ 2500 crore
Textile – ₹ 50,000 crore
Transport – ₹ 9384 crore

OTHER INVESTMENTS

Deep sea port at Sagar Island (Bhor Sagar) – ₹ 40,000 crore

SAIL – ₹ 40,000 crore expansion project

Druk Air will soon start flights from Bhutan linking Andal and Durgapur

Zhongtong Bus & Holding Company of China signed its first anchor investment deal with WBIDC, where each would have an 11% stake; it will start manufacturing buses in Bengal.

MoU between Calcutta Goods Transport Association and the State Transport Department for a ₹ 5000 crore project in Baidyabati, which would employ 10,000 people. It would be the biggest metropolitan logistics hub in greater Kolkata

MoU between WBMDTC and KIOCL for exploration, extraction and benefication of iron ore in West Bengal to invest ₹ 850 crore

Bosch will crowdfund technology to decongest traffic

MoU between business consulting firm, Dynamics Fortunes of the UK and the State Agriculture Ministry to promote rice from West Bengal. It would benefit one lakh farmers

The Department of Technical Education signed six agreements – with Iron and Steel Council, Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki, Leather Sector Skill Council and Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council – to benefit two lakh people

Hotels at the eco-tourism of Gajaldoba: Three-star resort by Sterling Holiday and two budget hotels by Summit Group and Seal Group

Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Ltd. will make 2000 dwelling units for the weaker sections of society in Durgapur, their largest such project. Three thousand more such units would be constructed in the future

Mahindra & Mahindra will invest for the first time in West Bengal, in Vidyasagar area of Kharagpur

Joint venture between HP and WBHIDCO to set up two telemedicine hubs via remote consulting. This would be a part of HP's CSR activities

MoU between the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (Government of India) and WEBEL in order to train two lakh youth in six centres over a period of three years

BGBS 2017

This year the third edition of BGBS was held at the Milan Mela ground on the 20th and the 21st of January. The then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, inaugurated the summit this year as state Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were also present and spoke on the occasion.

The event grew in size and stature in comparison with its last edition as delegates from across India and also from 29 countries, including four partner countries, participated in this year's



summit.

The summit brought together policy makers and corporate leaders from around the globe apart from delegations, academic and opinion makers to explore business opportunities, forge partnerships and collaborations.

The state government, this year, approached the summit with its 'Advantage Bengal' campaign that specifically showcased the advantages and opportunities for investment in the state in front of the industry captains and other delegates from both home and abroad. The campaign that highlighted the strategic location of Bengal, which is advantageous for trade purposes, was promoted at different sessions, including the inaugural plenary session, the multi-country interactions and the business to business (B2B) meetings.

'Advantage Bengal' also underlined the power scenario of the state. Bengal, as a power surplus state now, is leading in power generation, distribution, quality and availability in India. And another feature that was showcased prominently was the fact that Bengal achieved India's highest bank credit flow to the tune of $15 billion to MSMEs in the last five years since 2011-12.

Port, mining and MSME were the thrust areas at the BGBS 2017. The state government recently framed its Maritime Policy with the help of global analytical company CRISIL. Moreove ne government has also opened the door to wi n post-based industrialisation to add a sharp e ge in Bengal's trade scenario.

Promoting the state as the possessor of the third largest mineral resource across India, the Bengal government looked to get investment in mining sector as well. The Commerce & Industries department promoted the sectors like textile, gems and jewellery, leather, jute, forging, casting, apparel and handicraft under the MSMEs.

Besides, startups were the toast of the BGBS 2017, with some of the biggest entrepreneurs in recent times, from a taxi aggregation that has revolutionised urban transport in India to an online grocery that has transformed the lives of working couples, and a fast food chain that started its journey from Kolkata and has branches in 10 cities now, participating in the two-day event. The startup segment was organised in association with the Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata.

The first day of the Bengal Global Business Summit 2017 received accolades from the President of India on Bengal emerging as an investment destination. The day started with former Cricket India captain Sourav Ganguly making an impassioned appeal to investors to tap into the potential of Bengal. It was followed by



an audiovisual presentation on the investment opportunities in the state, and later various captains of industries-Y P Modi, Sanjiv Goenka, Kishore Biyani, Rakesh Bharti Mittal and Pankaj Munjal-sharing their experiences of running businesses in Bengal.

Sanjiv Goenka announced investment worth ₹ 10000 crore in Bengal over the next few years in FMCG sector. Rakesh Bharti Mittal announced investment worth ₹ 3000-4000 crore more in Bengal in the next three years. Y P Modi announced investments close to ₹ one billion in coal bed methane project in Bengal in the next six years. TCG Chairman Purnendu Chatterjee announced investments close to ₹ 1000 crore for HPL expansion. Hero Motors Group Chairman & MD Pankaj Munjal announced investments close to ₹ 450 crore for cycle manufacturing. GAIL has also decided to invest ₹ 6000 Crore in Bengal in the next couple of years including gas pipeline project.

During the plenary session, the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, congratulated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for moving ahead despite the legacies of the past. He hoped when the delegates would go back, they would be "taking a part of Bengal back with them".

Mukherjee later tweeted: "Bengal Global Business Summit showcases investment opportunities in West Bengal. Growth in state GDP and revenue buoyancy of West Bengal has been impressive. Large participation in the forum shows level of interest in West Bengal amongst investors."

Later, the delegates from the four partner countries and other foreign delegates graced the stage and shared their views on the opportunities for business ties with Bengal.

The second half of the first day witnessed a Plenary Session on Startups and Entrepreneurship. The startups that were present in the session included big names like Naukri and Foodpanda. The session was moderated by Mohandas Pai. Five home-grown startups of Bengal were showcased in the session.

On Day II, there were a lot of Parallel Sectoral sessions across the large venue. The ASEAN business development session 'Rising Bengal in Emerging Asia' was also held on Day II.

Apart from the business to government (B2G) meetings, 425 B2B meetings also took place and continued even after the closing of the Plenary Session.

Speaking at the Plenary Session of the Day II of the BGBS 2017, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that the summit has received an investment proposal to the tune of ₹ 2,35,290.03 crore (US$ 36 billion).

Out of this total investment proposals, the share of the manufacturing and Infrastructure sector was ₹ 61,765.70 crore; the MSME sector ₹ 50,710.00 crore; the urban development sector ₹ 46,600.00 crore; the transport sector ₹ 38,801.00 crore; the IT, ITES & telecom sector ₹ 18540.70 crore; the food processing, animal resource and fisheries sector ₹ 10,649.39 crore; the power & NES sector ₹ 3600.00 crore; the healthcare sector ₹ 2018.69 crore; the mining sector ₹ 1580.00 crore; the hospitality and tourism sector ₹ 784.55 crore; the education and skill development sector ₹ 140.00 crore; and the financial services sector ₹ 100.00 crore.

BGBS 2018

The Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2018,

held on January 16 and 17 with the presence of doyens of the Indian industry ended with a total investment proposal of over ₹ 2.19 lakh crore, with a potential to generate 20 lakh jobs.

The summit saw many large industrial houses showing interest and showering praise on the efforts of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Besides the international delegations, the industry titans like Mukesh Ambani, Lakshmi Niwas Mittal, Sajjan Jindal, Pranav Adani, Ajay Singh and Uday Kotak were present at the event. Also present were top industrialists like Sanjiv Goenka, Niranjan Hiranandani, Kishore Biyani, Sanjv Puri, Purnendu Chatterjee, H M Banger, Alok Lohia (Indo-Rama co-owner), Harsh Neotia and Saroj Poddar.

Flanked by Mittal and Ambani, the Chief Minister called the fourth edition of Bengal Global Business Summit as the "best" one in last four years.

Responding to the media persons, an elated Mamata Banerjee said, "BGBS 2018 is the top of the top business summits. This is one of the best summits we could have in the state. It is the blessing of the people which worked."

Industrialists shower praises on Mamata Banerjee.

Mukesh Ambani, the Chairman of Reliance Industries, said, "Didi under your leadership, West Bengal is becoming Best Bengal."

Ambani said that West Bengal was leader "in ease of doing business", attributing this to industrial peace under the government of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

He described the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, the venue of this year's summit in the intelligent city New Town, Kolkata, as "World class".

"Every time I come to Kolkata, I see a new Kolkata and new Bengal. More vibrant, more dynamic, more beautiful and more optimistic than before. Bengal has said goodbye to the slow growth rate of the past. It is now embracing the future with the grace and agility of the Bengal Tiger. Didi, under your leadership, West Bengal is becoming Best Bengal," Ambani said.

Mittal, who flew down from the UK to attend the inaugural ceremony, said, "Bengal had all the ingredients for a business-friendly environment."

The steel magnate said, "Today's Bengal shows great change—officers come from all across India to learn e-governance to Bengal which brings me great joy and pride."

Sajjan Jindal said, "Today whatever we are seeing in Bengal is an amazing change brought about by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. I will urge everyone to treat Bengal as the first choice for investment."

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in her address to the delegates, thanked the captains of industry, business delegates and distinguished guests from all over the world for making the Bengal Global Business Summit 2018 so hugely successful.

New investment proposals worth nearly ₹ 2 lakh 19 thousand 925 crore have been received in this Summit. This figure will increase as more and more proposals were coming in, she said in her address on January 17.

More than 20 lakh employment will be generated from these new proposals, she added.

"The industrialists are calling Bengal the best state because we do not treat anybody as outsider," she said. "Nobody is outsider to us. So, I will appeal to all industrialists to consider Bengal as their home and the government and the people as their families."

Earlier on the inaugural day of the event on January 16, Banerjee said that her government "will only give love and affection" and will not intimidate or put pressure on industry, and urged businesses to invest in the entire region and not just in Bengal.

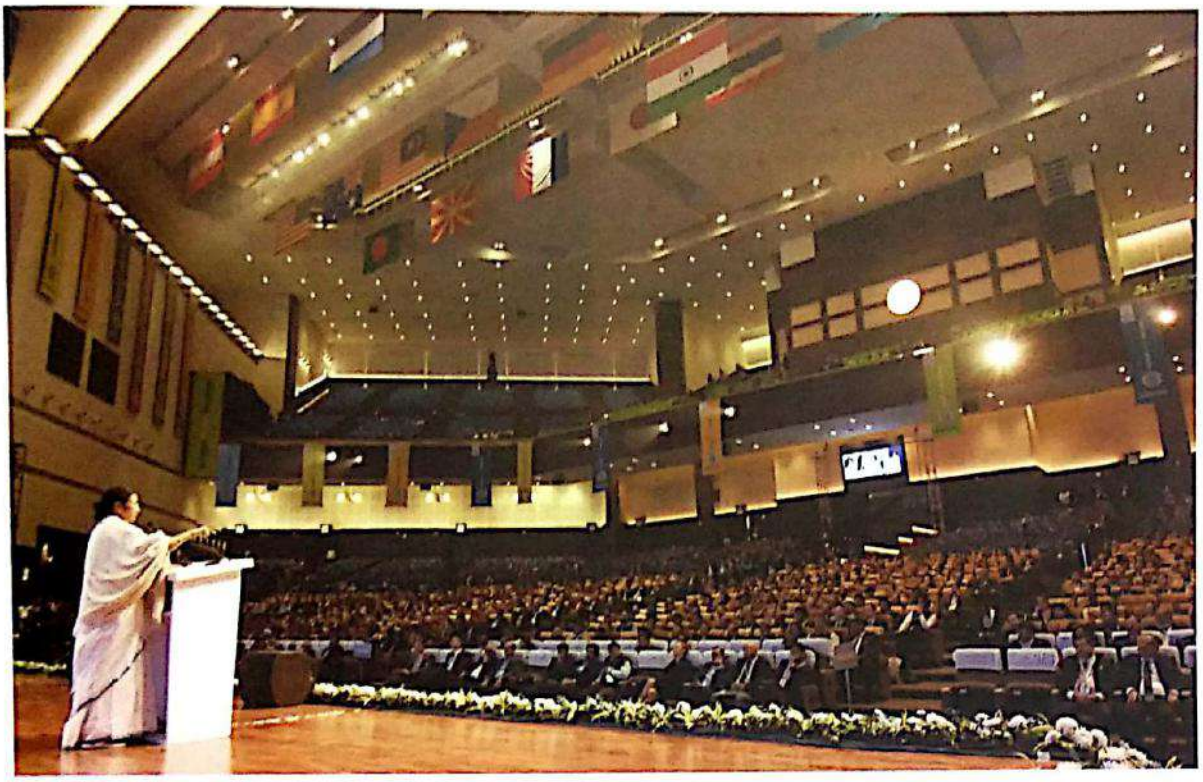
"Bengal is the gateway of the eastern and north-eastern states, and the ASEAN Countries as well. The region has immense potential in terms of strategic issues. From Bengal, you can explore the entire region.

"Other parts of the country have many things and those places are almost exhausted. But eastern states have immense scopes for investment. And above all, we have political stability here," she said.

She further said that her government's mantra was "Tolerance for all".

"Bengal will not deprive you. We are tolerant. If industry faces issues, then how can we expect them to generate jobs? There would be no pressure, no discrimination and no intimidation from our side. We will only give love and affection," Banerjee said. "We can feel the pain if industries face problems. This is the same with the agriculture industry too. We will grow if we walk forward taking industry and agriculture together. We want both agriculture and industry smile."

Despite facing legacy issues, Bengal has succeeded in changing its mindset and moved on leaving the history of strikes and lock-outs far behind, the Chief Minister said.



The summit this year had nine partner countries—Japan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy and the United Kingdom. The summit featured plenary sessions, government to business (G2B) sessions and business to business (B2B) sessions over two days.

More than 2500 delegates including 350 overseas delegates from 32 countries across the continents took part in the 4th BGBS.

Prominent among the overseas delegates were the Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland, the Vice Governor of Jiangshu province of China, the Vice Governor from Jeollanam-do province of Republic of Korea and the officials of NRW Region of Germany who attended the summit with business delegates from their respective countries.

Like in earlier occasions, the perceptional change about Bengal was once again visible from the participation of delegates this year who expressed their business interests in Bengal.

This year, the big-ticket event had a new venue, the recently constructed Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in New Town. The imposing edifice-with a 3200-capacity main auditorium along with exhibition halls, banquets, restaurants and a 112-bed lodging accommodation-had been formally opened by the Chief Minister in October last year.

The forward-looking policy regime, transformative reforms in ease of doing business and facilitative entrepreneurial environment in Bengal has been the driver in attracting the attention of investors from India and across the world to Bengal. Advancing forward from the theme of *Come to Bengal and Ride the Growth*, this year the underlying theme was *Bengal Means Business*.

A host of policies namely Logistic Park Development and Promotion Policy, Export Promotion Policy and RORO (Roll On/Roll Off cargo vessels) Operation Promotion Policy were announced at the summit.

The significant take-away of Day One of the summit included Mukesh Ambani's commitment of an additional ₹ 5,000 crore of investment in non-Jio business, apart from investing towards laying the optical fibre cable network for Jio services.

Sajjan Jindal said that they were planning to invest ₹ 10,000 crore in the next four years in Bengal that will include steel along with cement expansion, power and paints.

Sanjiv Goenka, Chairman of RP Sanjiv Goenka Group, said that his company will invest ₹ 1,000 crore towards its power distribution business; and also promised to set up an FMCG park.

SpiceJet, according to its Chairman, Ajay Singh, will explore making operational flight services from the Andal airport to Hyderabad and Bengaluru. It will also explore beginning sea plane services in the state.

Adani Group will invest ₹ 750 crore to double the capacity of the company's edible oil refinery at

Haldia from 1600 tonne per day in the next five years. Packaging will also be expanded from 1200 tonne to 1800 tonne.

Announcing this on the concluding day of the summit, Pranav Adani expressed interest to invest in port, agriculture and power sectors.

Stating that they will also be exploring in the business of agri-logistics and warehousing in the state, Adani said that the Group wants to replicate the Mundra port in Kutch in Bengal.

In the power sector, Adani said, they are keen on offering their expertise in transmission and renewable energy.

Over the two days of the summit, 110 MoUs were signed across various sectors.

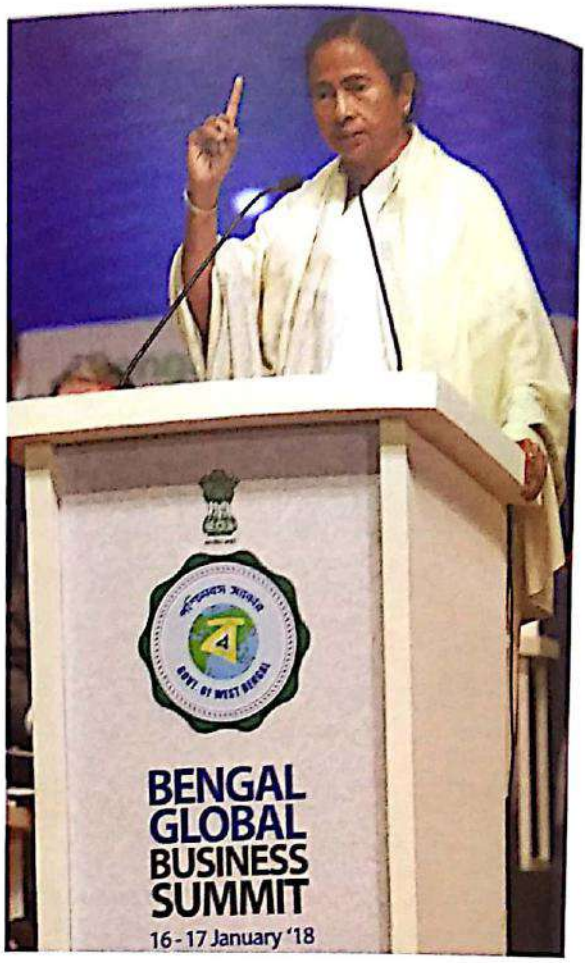
Among the big-ticket MoUs signed at the summit, the major ones included:

- MoU on mining, power and several other sectors signed between the Power & NES department of the Government of West Bengal and the Government of Poland (Silesian Region)
- MoU on Energy Action Plan for West Bengal signed between the Power & NES department of the Government of West Bengal and GIZ Germany (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit or German Society for International Cooperation)
- Three MoUs for collaboration in various fields signed by the Jadavpur University with the Exeter University of England, Edinburgh University of Scotland and Eotvos Lorand University of Hungary
- MoU for collaboration in the area of higher education signed between the Presidency University and the Edinburgh University
- MoU signed between the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation and the National Institute of Design for setting up State Design Centre in Kolkata to open new frontiers in cutting edge technologies

Among the major B2G meetings, the highlights were the exchanges the state Information Technology & Electronics had with the DQ Entertainment company for setting up Animation Academy, with SAP Software and Solutions on Blockchain technology for Land Ledger and with Fujisoft for reskilling youth in the field of cloud computing, ubiquitous computing and emerging technologies.

Notable multinational companies including Dassault, Aramco, Dubai Multi Commodities Center, Samsung, Pepsico, Covestro and Chemixil expressed their business interests in Bengal.

Among the India-based firms, Reliance, Future Retail, Jaipuria Group, Adani Group, JSW Group, Hiranandani Group, Kotak Group, SpiceJet



Group and many more expressed their investment intentions.

Big players in the apparel sector like Triburg India, Impulse India and SNQS International made offers to set up apparel buying hubs in the Paridhan Garment Park in eastern Kolkata.

A significant outcome of the summit was the increasing employment opportunities for the youth in the state.

Dassault Systems signed off with Indian Chamber of Commerce for setting up a Design Centre.

Apparel Export Promotion Council announced the setting up of a Skill Development Centre in their Salt Lake campus.

Uber and Ola signed off with the state Transport department to increase employment opportunities for the youth.

In addition, huge employment growth will occur with the large investments that will fructify as a result of BGBS 2018.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, reflecting on the 4th BGBS, said that based on the investment proposals received, 20 lakh jobs would be created in sectors like manufacturing, information technology, cement, services, tourism, infrastructure, skill development, health and education.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Industry
On the highway of resurgence

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is the key growth indicator of industrial development in a state. It has been the constant endeavour of the new government since coming to power in 2011 to consistently pursue the cause of industrial growth and development under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, which helped the state's industrial growth to clock far above the national figures. While the all-India industrial growth in 2015-16 reached 7.3%, West Bengal registered a higher growth of 10.6% in the same parameter. The landmark achievements in industry and industrial infrastructure development include the setting up of seven new industrial parks and growth centres as well as revamping and enlarging by investing significantly on the infrastructure of eight other industrial parks to make them to world class that has, in turn, attracted sizeable investments from several top companies such as BASF India (Germany), Mahindra & Mahindra, Shapoorji & Pallonji, Pepsico India, Tata Hitachi Construction Company, Matrix Fertilizers, BAPL, OCL Cements, JSW Cements, Reliance Cements, Shree Cements, Larsen & Toubro, Amul Dairy, Shriram Infrastructure, Jayashree Textiles of the Aditya Birla Group, Farida Group (the largest shoe exporter in India), Future Group, SAIL, ITC, CESC, Exide Industries, BRG Group, Globus Spirit, CPF India, Inox Air Products, Brahm Energy, Xpro India, IRCTC, H&R Johnson, TIL, Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, Titagarh Wagons and Texmaco of the Adventz Group.

The Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC) has been approved along the alignment of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) that traverses a route length of 1839 km extending from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni in West Bengal. Also the Raghunathpur Industrial





Park in Purulia has been selected as the priority site for developing the proposed Integrated Manufacturing Cluster (IMC) on 2483 acres of land.

Among the new interventions in the petrochemicals and plastics sector, the brightest example is the case of the Haldia Petrochemicals Limited, which had gone to BIFR in the erstwhile regime. The present government has brought it back from the brink of failure, and it is now going full throttle at 97% capacity use, employing over 3000 workers. This has provided with the raw material for 2500 downstream industry in the sector, generating employment for nearly five lakh people. The erstwhile Mitsubishi Chemicals has also been revamped, and it now employs about 2500 people.

Revenue collection in the mining sector has gone up from ₹ 88.66 crore in 2010-11 to ₹ 528.25 crore in 2016-17.

The state government has been holding annual Bengal Global Business Summit since 2015. The first edition of the summit in 2015 attracted investment proposals of ₹ 243100 crore with participation of 20 countries while the second in 2016 attracted investment proposals of ₹ 250253.74 crore with participation of 26 countries, the third summit in 2017-despite the economic slowdown triggered by the demonetisation drive taken up by the Centre-attracted investment proposals of ₹ 235290.03 crore with participation of 29 countries and the fourth summit, the BGBS 2018, earned a total investment proposal of over ₹ 2.19 lakh crore, and 32 countries took part in the event that included nine partner countries. This underlined the primacy of West Bengal as an attractive investment destination and reflected the progressive policy regime of the state government.





Among major initiatives taken by the state government in the ports and maritime sector include the setting up of two deep sea ports, one at Tajpur in Purba Medinipur and the other at the Sagar Islands in South 24 Parganas.

To ensure ease of doing business in the state, the government has simplified the procedure for setting up industries. For the benefit of the large scale industrial units, a software on online single-window clearance system, called Shilpasathi, for obtaining 11 kinds of statutory clearances from different departments has been developed by the state government.

With a view to rejuvenate the state's tea industry, five tea gardens belonging to the West Bengal Tea Development Corporation have been handed over to the selected bidders, and the leases have been executed in favour of the new buyers. There has been no retrenchment of workers during the transfer process.

Among major initiatives taken in the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) sector include cluster development project aimed at enhancing productivity and competitiveness of MSMEs of homogeneous nature in a contiguous area, the Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme in Dakshin Dinajpur with a cost of ₹ 46 crore involving 11153 weavers, a ₹ 28 crore joint venture project with the UNESCO for setting up Rural Craft Hub and Rural Craft & Culture Hub, the Project Muslin, the Project Baluchari, the Project Mat, the rejuvenation of the Calcutta Leather Complex, schemes for promoting private parties to set up industrial parks, programmes like Tanti Sathi for providing handlooms and accessories for loomless weavers and Karma Tirtha for providing marketing and allied infrastructure for the artisans, the weavers and for other village industries, setting up of rural and urban handloom marketing complexes, launching the West Bengal Handloom Circuit Development scheme and the development of the Industrial Growth Corridor (IGC) for accelerated industrial growth along the national and the state highways.

Besides, an MSME Venture Capital Fund of the size of ₹ 200 crore has been created for equity support to the MSMEs. An MSME-Finance Portal (www.myenterprisewb.in), equipped with online credit assessment facility for every project proposal uploaded, has also been launched as a virtual meeting ground for the entrepreneurs, investors and professional experts.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Ease of Doing Business
A bunch of new pragmatic initiatives

West Bengal is a key state of India where industrial growth is higher than the national average. To accelerate industrial growth, the West Bengal government has cut through time-consuming, resource-draining procedures-a foe of any business-to spur growth. It has embarked upon smart public administration that is crucial for industrial competitiveness and economic growth.

A lot of initiatives have been taken in this direction by various government departments in the new regime that took charge in May 2011 as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee realised that the infamous red-tapism has to be first done away with. And thus the challenges of availability of all statutory information in the public domain, introduction of web-based and online services, simplification of government procedures, ease of making application, cutting down on unnecessary paper work and timely delivery of services have been addressed.

Among these, the most far-reaching change has been the digitisation of services so that new and old businesses are required to submit data less frequently and services can be provided more efficiently and securely for everyone.

In the arena of large industries, Shilpa Sathi provides single-window application services to entrepreneurs for doing business with minimal hassle and transaction costs. The pricing policy of land in industrial parks has gone online, resulting in more transparency. The disbursement of incentives can now be tracked online. The whole range of tax administration and payment for all government transactions have also gone online.

In the MSME sector, web-based platforms provide a variety of services; from simplified versions of Acts and Rules, the requirement of statutory compliances to the location of





government offices. A Single Application Gateway receives all applications made by an entrepreneur to government entities for statutory compliances and to avail government incentives, which means an applicant now is not required to visit government offices for clearances and approvals. A new web portal allows entrepreneurs to post their business proposals on the portal, after which he is connected to investors and professional experts or mentors.

In the non-digital space, large-scale simplification of procedures and new initiatives are changing the landscape of doing business in the areas such as food processing industries and horticulture, infrastructure and development, municipal affairs, panchayats and rural development, land and land reforms, labour and transport. Simplification of the process of getting trade licenses, building plan sanctions, delinking approvals from other departments that do not add value to decision-making by the department concerned, faster mutation and conversion of land, replacing affidavits and attestation by gazetted officer with self-declaration/attestation, appropriate delegation and decentralization have guided these initiatives. Necessary amendments in labour laws are being undertaken. Getting fire licenses, environment clearances, power connections etc have become easier and time-bound. The Right to Services Act of the state government lays down a definite deadline to provide various services to the citizens. The services covered under the Act are reviewed regularly, and more and more services are being added to the list.

Under an agreement with IIM Calcutta, 400 departmental officers have taken training at the institute.

These tools have the potential to change the business environment in the state and the results are already showing. From here, the only way to go is forward and the state government is committed to doing that.



Schemes and Projects Empowering the under-privileged

Empowerment of the under-privileged and making the needy self-reliant, these are the two bullets on which rests any discourse on running a welfare state. You have to go by sectors and address the weakness areas of the people so that you can launch some schemes and projects specifically for the target groups providing them with some all-important relief, which would add up to an inclusive development at the end of the day. A mass leader in the true sense turned Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee realised it more than any of her predecessors did and started to work since almost day one of inception of the new government right from the word go.

Talking about the schemes and projects that the new government launched since its inception, the one that would invariably come to mind first is Kanyashree, which has catapulted the state to the position of a role model for not only the other states of India but internationally as well.

Let's first run through the body and purpose of the scheme.

On October 1, 2013 Kanyashree was introduced to reduce the number of school drop-outs and to eradicate social evils like child marriage and trafficking of women. Unmarried girl children between 13–18 years of age whose family income is less than ₹ 1 lakh 20 thousand per annum and studying between Class VIII and Class XII in government recognised regular schools/madrasahs/open schools or equivalent



vocational/technical training institutes or in colleges and universities would get ₹ 750 per annum (K-1). Unmarried girls between 18-19 years of age and studying in any of the above mentioned institutions will get a one-time grant of ₹ 25000 (K-2). Till date more than 40 lakh girls have been enrolled under the scheme. August 14 is celebrated in the state as Kanyashree Day every year.

This dream project of the Chief Minister has been awarded with international recognition at the topmost level. The flagship project, implemented by the state Women and child Development department, bagged the first prize among 552 nominations from 62 countries in the category of 'Reaching the poorest and most vulnerable through inclusive services and participation' in the World Forum held at The Hague in the Netherlands on the occasion of the United Nations Public Service Day on June 23, 2017.

For its uniqueness, Kanyashree has also received several awards before.

At present the Kanyashree girls are getting different sorts of trainings. To sell their products an exclusive outlet named 'Sukanya' has been opened at Mukutmanipur, Bankura. They are also receiving training for self-defence and sports. Now Kanyashree Football tournament is also being organised. To make them self-supported, Kanyashree Club, Kanyashree Sangha and Kanyashree Joddha are also being created.

Let's now take a glance at the other flagship projects and schemes launched by the new government since its inception in the year 2011.

Sabujsree

Under this project, implemented by the state Forest department, a valuable sapling will be distributed to every new born child at the time of release from the hospital. The sapling will grow with the baby. Parents of the baby will be requested to name the tree after the baby. As the child attains youth the sapling grows into a tree, not only offering flowers, fruits and oxygen but also ensuring financial prosperity of the child. Certificates issued by the state Forest department will allow the felling or sale of the tree hassle-free. The project was initiated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on December 19, 2016. The project increases awareness and attaches values about environment and society to the younger generation. The project will transform the state into a Green Bengal.



Khadya Sathi

The main purpose of this project, implemented by the state Food and Supply department, is to ensure food and nutrition by supply of food.



Under this project about 8 crore 66 lakh people, that is almost 90.6% of population, would come under food security. With the inspiration of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Khadya Sathi Project under RKSY has come into effect throughout the state since January 27, 2016, for those who had not been earmarked under NFSA backward in socio-economic terms. The backward classes include people from primitive tribal groups, workers of closed tea gardens, pavement dwellers of Kolkata, 'Aila'-affected people, drought affected of Purulia, residents of Darjeeling hill area and inhabitants of Jangalmahal. They will get foodgrains at the rate of ₹ 2 per Kg. This apart, another 50 lakh people, who applied in 'White form' will get food-grains at the cost of half of the market price. A special coupon has been introduced for all mothers and babies admitted in Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres. 5 Kg of rice, 2.5 kg of wheat, 1 kg pulses and 1 Kg of grams will be provided to them against this coupon. Above all, initiative has been taken by the government to digitise all ration cards of the state.

Suphal Bangla

To ensure food and nutritional security at reasonable price for the people who still live below



the poverty line on one hand, and on the other, ensure remunerative prices for growers along with development of the agricultural economy, the '*Suphal Bangla*' project has been introduced. The project commenced through almost door to door selling of vegetables in mobile van from September 2014. The project generated millions of on-farm and off-farm employment opportunities.

Gitanjali

In order to provide free shelters to the poor, the Government of West Bengal in its Housing department has launched a project under



the name of Gitanjali. The project serves two purposes; it provides shelters to the economically weaker section of the society as well as creates additional employment opportunities for construction workers. The state government is providing ₹ 70 thousand per house in plain area and ₹ 75 thousand per house at Hill area and also at Sundarban area under the project. The homeless but owner of a land and having monthly income below ₹ 6000, may apply under this project. Through the District Magistrate, 70% will be deposited as first installment to the Bank account of the beneficiary and the residue 30% will be deposited as second installment. To get the advantage the prospective beneficiary only should have a hassle-free land by his own name.

Nija Griha Nija Bhumi

This one is unique in a sense that to some extent it is a multi-purpose project in so far as rehabilitation is concerned. To fulfill the dream



of 'one's own house' of innumerable people of rural Bengal, the Government of West Bengal has launched this Nija Griha Nija Bhumi project. Houseless agricultural labourers, artisans and fishermen etc may apply. Marginal people from different Self-Help Groups may also apply to be the beneficiaries of the project. Under this project implemented jointly by the state Land and Land Reforms department and the Refugee Relief & Rehabilitation department, ownership of five decimals of land per family of houseless agricultural labourers, artisans and fishermen has been given. They will be able to build houses on this land with different grants from the government and by the labour of their family members and they can carry out farming or animal husbandry etc on the land adjacent to the house.

Sikshasree

This project, Sikshasree, implemented by the state Backward Classes Welfare Department and Tribal Welfare department, is for those students



of the state who belong to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. To reduce the number of drop-outs the state government has initiated the grant to students of Class V to Class VIII. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes students who do not stay in government hostels and

belong to the families with yearly income less than ₹ 2.5 lakh are eligible for the grant. Each of the Scheduled Castes students of Class V to Class VII will get a grant of ₹ 750 per annum and those of Class VIII will get a grant of ₹ 800 per annum, while students belonging to Scheduled Tribes and studying from Class V to Class VIII will get a grant of ₹ 800 per annum.

Sabooj Sathi

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee flagged off this unique scheme Sabooj Sathi at Jangalmahal in 2015. Under this scheme, implemented by the



state Backward Classes Welfare department, 70 lakh students of the state studying between Class IX and Class XII in government/government-recognised regular schools/ madrasahs or equivalent got cycles for commuting to schools. The project was christened as 'Sabooj Sathi' by Chief Minister herself and the logo was also drawn by her. The project has been introduced to reduce the number of school drop-outs. Backward Classes Welfare Department is the nodal Department of this project. Scheduled Caste and Tribal welfare and finance Corporation under this department serves as the nodal agency. Steering committee formed with secretaries and senior officers of different departments directs the project. SDOs, BDOs and Executive officers of Municipalities serve as the nodal officers in district level. Three reputed cycle manufacturers viz. Hero, TI Cycles and Avon have been selected to supply the cycles as recommended by Intra-departmental tender committee. The whole project is executed through e-governance. With the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC), an exclusive website–www.wbsaboojsathi.gov.in–has been introduced for the purpose. The project has created waves and is very popular among the students.

Yuvasree

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the project Yuvasree on October 3, 2013, at Netaji Indoor Stadium in Kolkata. Young citizens of the



state can increase their eligibility with the help of this scheme implemented under the aegis of the state Labour department. The beneficiaries shall have to submit self attested declaration in every six months in respect of their qualification. The person who gets a job loses the right to grant. Young citizens belonging to the age of 18 to 45, who registered their names at employment exchanges and passed Class VIII, but are yet to get any suitable placement will get an amount of ₹ 1500 per month as allowance under Yuvasree scheme from the state government. Only one person from a family will get this allowance. The tagline of this scheme is 'Break desperation, Build Life'. Till now almost 2.2 lakh young citizens have been enrolled under this scheme.

Gatidhara

To encourage unemployed youths to take up transport as the means of livelihood, the Government of West Bengal in its Transport



department launched this project. The applicant should belong to the age of 18 to 45 and be registered at employment bank under Labour

Department with monthly family income below ₹ 25,000. The SC, St and OBC applicants, however, will get a relaxation of five and three years, respectively. Only one person from a family will get this allowance. Beneficiaries of Yuvasree may also apply for it. Under this project, loans in easy terms to buy cars/ trucks/lorries etc are made available either through Regional Transport Office or through bank. With the help of the Transport Department 'Permit' will be issued on priority basis to the purchaser of cars under this scheme. Applications should be submitted either to WBTIDCL or to any dealers in cars assisting Gatidhara. In case of any problem applicants may contact nearest RTO office.

Sishusathi

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is always alive to the cause of children. '*Sishusathi*' scheme is her brain child with a promise to providing free treatment to children below 12 years of age and



in need of heart surgeries, irrespective of the financial status of their parents. For the purpose, the government has gone into an agreement with a few private hospitals in addition to government hospitals. Besides, the state government will conduct health tests in schools regularly. Apart from this Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Sick Neo-natal Care Unit (SNCU) and Sick Born Stabilization Units (SBSU) have been established throughout the state. To get the benefit at district level one may contact with CMOH and for Block level one should have to contact with BMOH offices. For Kolkata one should have to contact with SSKM (PG) Hospital or Calcutta Medical College Hospital.

Madhur Sneha

Human milk bank '*Madhur Sneha*', for the mother-less baby or those weak and under-weight or whose mothers cannot breast feed, has started

MADHUR SNEHA
Human Milk Bank



operations from August 2013 at SSKM Hospital, Kolkata. This bank preserves and collects human milk and pasteurises it. Apart from this, the first 'Cord Blood Bank' has also been made operational. All existing functional delivery points are now having New Born Care Corners (NBCC). Neonatal Wards and PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit) have become functional in a few Medical Colleges. Few 'Mother & Child Hubs' (MCH) are also operational in the State.

Fair Price Medicine Shop and Fair Price Diagnostic Centre

The Government of West Bengal has taken a historic decision in offering 'Zero out of Pocket Expenditure to all' on account of treatment in Government Hospitals. Still for the sake of the



poor the state government has started a few unique schemes. One of these is '*Fair Price Medicine Shops*'. This project is considered as ideal to the whole nation. Under the project medicines are sold at a discount of 48% to 77.7% over the MRP. Many shops have been opened all over the state in collaboration with few private organisations. Similarly '*Fair Price Diagnostic Centres*' have also been setup. The centres offer more than 50% discounts in facilities like Dialysis Services, Digital X-Ray, CT Scans and MRI etc. and provide free services to the poor.

Lot of centres have been founded till now. Apart from these, the overall ambiances of Government Hospitals have remarkably changed with clean corridors, state of the art facilities and waiting rooms for patients' relatives. So far 41 Super-specialty hospitals with advanced healthcare facilities are also coming up in phases.

Amar Fasal, Amar Gola; Amar Fasal, Amar Gari; Amar Dhan, Amar Chatal

In this state there was a huge wastage of crops as the marginal farmers had neither any storehouse nor any vending cart. To save the farmers from



this loss, the Agricultural Marketing Department has launched a few projects. Chief Minister herself has named the projects as *'Amar fasal, amar gola'*, *'Amar fasal, amar gari'* and *'Amar dhan, amar chatal'*. Under these schemes a subsidy varying between Rs. 5000/- and Rs. 25000/- will be provided for the storehouses, ₹ 10,000 for vending carts or van rickshaws along with polycrates and drying machines for paddy drying.

Kisan Credit Card

The Government of West Bengal has introduced the *'Kisan Credit Card'* in order to save the farmers from high rate of interest against loan. Users of this card can get loan at a low rate of interest rate from different Rural Banks, Cooperative Banks and Public Sector Banks. A lot of landless farmers have also got Pattas for land. This is an all time record.

Jal Dharo Jal Bharo

A programme named *'Jal Dharo Jal Bharo'* was launched by the Government of West Bengal with the aim of preserving precious water resources as well as arresting runoff of rainwater. Initiative was taken to extend the holding capacities of all kinds of water bodies viz, tanks, ponds, reservoirs, canals etc. This increased capacity of the water



bodies will immensely support protective irrigation during dry spells. This will also help the local villagers in their animal husbandry activities and pisciculture. Till now, more than 1.30 lakh water bodies/ retention structures have been constructed. Apart from this, a special programme by the name of 'Jaltirtha' has been taken up for irrigation at the dry areas of Birbhum, Bankura, Purulia and Paschim Medinipur districts.

Matir Katha

'Matir Katha' is an agriculture based portal involving five departments of the Government i.e. Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing, Animal



Husbandry, Fisheries and Horticulture. Useful information about different sectors of agriculture is available through this portal to serve the citizens of West Bengal even at the grass-root level.

Prandhara

It has been experienced during relief work that water pouches are very useful for easy distribution of drinking water. However these are difficult to handle as rate of leakage is quite high.



To overcome these difficulties, state government has introduced bottled drinking water named '*Prandhara*'.

Karmatirtha

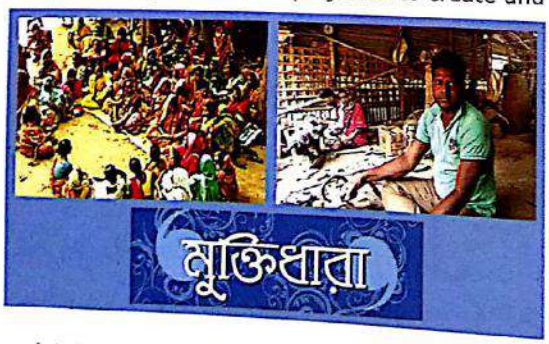
To sell the products of different self-help groups to rural buyers and also to create more employment opportunities, the Chief Minister



of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee has started the project *Karmatirtha* in August 2013. Under this project, products of different groups of different panchayats are available under one roof. Government has a plan to create 500 hubs of these specifications.

Muktidhara

The project named *Muktidhara* was launched in Purulia district on March 13, 2013. Members of SHGs were trained under this project on pilot basis. The objective of the project is to create and



maintain sustainable livelihood of SHG members. The project is being implemented in association with NABARD. After training, the members of SHGs have got credit linkage with the banks.

Samabyathi

In case of death of a member from distressed family, the next of kin will get a one-time grant amounting to ₹ 2000 for the last rites. To get this grant, all testimonials confirming the death have



to be submitted along with an application in plain paper, either to the Panchayat or Municipality office. If the deceased person had no relative, his nearest neighbours may apply. In case of any problem one may contact the Panchayat or Municipality office.

Lokprasar Prakalpa

'Lokprasar Prakalpa' scheme is the brainchild of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with a view to nourish and restore Bengal's folk art. Under the scheme, each of the folk artistes in the age



group of 18 to 60 years gets retainer allowance of ₹ 1000 per month and the folk artistes above 60 years get ₹ 1000 per month as pension. Also each of them will get an honorarium of ₹ 1000 per programme. This money goes directly to the bank accounts of the respective folk artistes. The folk artistes are playing an important role in publicity of different developmental programmes of the government. Folk artistes are very much encouraged with the scheme. Almost two lakh folk artistes have come under the purview of the project since its inception.

Panchayats & Rural Development

Empowering the grassroots

She has always believed in developing West Bengal right from the grassroots level. And that is why she, Mamata Banerjee the true mass leader, laid so much of stress on the panchayats and rural development sector ever since she took over as the Chief Minister of the state in May 2011. Now, over the last six and a half years, this very policy of hers has led to the development of the state on a scale never seen before. The state has surged ahead in so many ways, and is now one of the best-performing states in India in terms of functioning of the panchayats. West Bengal has in fact been honoured with global awards for rural development and also secured the top rank among states in the implementation of 100-days job scheme.

But the transformation marked by empowerment of the grassroots bodies of rural Bengal, understandably, didn't take place overnight.

The West Bengal Panchayat Act was amended in 2012 to bring reservation for the Backward Classes in all the three tiers within the overall ceiling of 50 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and the Backward Classes taken together. In the amended version of the Panchayat Act, reservation of seats for women in all the tiers and across all the groups (SC, ST and Backward Classes) has been raised from thirty three to fifty per cent. The Panchayat Election 2013 was held on the basis of such revised reservation, thereby making the Panchayat system more inclusive and gender-sensitive.

In 2015, the West Bengal Panchayat Act and Rules were amended to bring in the element of Ease of Doing Business by simplifying the system of licences and permissions for building construction and running business establishments in the Panchayat area.





The honoraria of the office bearers of the three-tier PRI bodies were enhanced in February 2017. Honorarium was also introduced for the general members of all the three-tiers of the Panchayats. Under the Right to Public Services Act 2013, specific time schedules and procedures were notified for granting permission for construction of building, registration for trade and registration for vehicles (other than those covered by the Motor Vehicles Act).

A two-day state Panchayat conference was organised on February 3-4, 2017, at the Netaji Indoor stadium in Kolkata where three districts, 10 blocks and one Gram Panchayat were awarded for successfully carrying out the projects and also showcase the various schemes that have achieved success and received national appreciation. This was for the first time such a conference was held in the state.

As per the figures came out at the state Panchayat conference, over 50 lakh Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs) have been constructed in the state, which is highest in the country. The numbers of IHHLs constructed during 2013-14, 2015-16 and 2016-17 (up to January 27, 2017) were 6.08 lakh, 8.47 lakh, 14.32 lakh and 18.83 lakh respectively.

Under Mission Nirmal Bangla, one of the flagship projects taken up by the new state government, Nadia was the country's first to have been declared as Open Defecation Free district (ODF). Six more districts—Hooghly, Purba Medinipur, Bardhaman, Cooch Behar, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas—have been declared ODF by March that year, taking the total number of ODF districts to 7 by March 31, 2017. Steps have been taken to declare all the districts as ODF by March 2019.

Generation of nearly 1 billion mandays in MGNREGA led to state's performance in terms of employment generation to be close to the approved labour budgets; in terms of expenditure, it was more than ₹ 186 billion with an average of ₹ 4000 crore per year.

Under the Indira Awas Yojona (IAY), the state Panchayat and Rural Development department has made major achievement.

The department has taken up capacity building and training of elected representatives and functionaries of panchayats. Constant monitoring of the projects led to the success of the gram panchayats which led to major development in rural Bengal.

Meanwhile, a new pro-poor initiative, named 'Samabyathi' was introduced in January 2017 by providing ₹ 2000.00 in favour of the next to keen of a deceased person in rural areas for organising funeral. Since the introduction of the programme, 25478 households have been benefited by this initiative and a sum of ₹ 5.1 crore has so far been utilised.

In 100 days' work West Bengal improved its performance over the years and established itself as the leader in enhancing both quantity and quality of programme implementation.

Quantity-wise, over the period of the last six



and a half years from July 2011, 127.16 crore person-days could be generated, which was way better than the quantum of employment generation from inception of work under the Act in 2006 till June 2011 (54.15 Crore). In terms of expenditure, it was more than ₹ 27682.05 crore with an average of ₹ 4614 crore per year. Expenditure per Gram Panchayat rose from ₹ 87.39 lakh in 2011-12 to ₹ 212.22 lakh in 2016-17. In 2016-17, the state's expenditure in MGNREGA was as high as ₹ 7283.45 crore.

On the qualitative front, West Bengal brought in a series of innovative programmes in MGNREGA, which included Fly Ash Brick manufacturing units, shared plantation by the self-help groups on leasehold land, stabilisation of river embankments through bio-engineering etc for river bank protection, a special variety of grasses, vetiver with its penetrating roots capable of holding earth from erosion has been introduced. The programme, introduced in Nadia was christened by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as Sabujayan and has spread over to 13 districts.

Over the years, West Bengal emerged as a major player in achieving convergence with different departments and programmes, thereby extending the reach of development interventions in rural area. 26 departments of the state government comprising of 33 programmes/ schemes could be brought under convergence portfolio. Ensuring survival of trees planted under 100 days' work West Bengal received accolades for its Briksha Patta initiative giving usufruct rights to the job seekers over trees assigned to them for maintenance for a period of three years. Around 3.5 million plants were assigned to 30000 households. Job-card holders under the programme were engaged in plantation activities linking the wage rate on survival of plants. The job-card holders possess usufruct right on minor produce with share in timber value under the initiative.

A pilot initiative has been taken in 40 springs in Darjeeling to address the problem of dwindling water supply of the region. Springshed Development initiative, named as Banglar Jharnadhara Prakalpa, is all set to make positive changes in water availability in the hills. 13 springs in Jalpaiguri and eight in Alipurduar have also been included in the pilot.

In a diversified initiative under 100 days' work, a river rejuvenation project has been taken up for Gandeswari (30 km), Birai (22 km) and Damodar (20 km) in Bankura and Hooghly. This particular initiative has been named as Banglar Srotodhara Prakalpa and is expected to make major contribution in enhancing livelihood of the rural poor in the catchment areas.

Under Mission Nirmal Bangla, a baseline survey conducted in 2012-13 identified 67.77 lakh households without access to toilets. Since 2013-14 concerted effort resulted in ensuring access to 52.62 lakh households raising the coverage rate to 90 per cent of the rural households. The number of IHHLs covered during 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 have been 6.08 lakh,

8.47 lakh, 14.32 lakh and 23.22 lakh respectively. Nadia emerged in April 2015 as the first Open Defecation Free district of the country. In 2016-17, four more districts, viz., Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, Purba Medinipur and Cooch Behar have achieved ODF status. Moreover, undivided Bardhaman and South 24 Parganas districts have declared themselves as ODF and the state-level verification in these two districts is continuing.

The state reported 21324 villages as 'Declared ODF', covering 1929 GPs till May 17, 2017, again highest in the country.

In the last six years from 2011-12 (i.e., from 2011-12 to 2015-16) 18.94 lakh houses were sanctioned under the Banglar Awas Yojana programme.

In 2016-17, West Bengal could successfully integrate Socio-Economic Caste Census data in selection of beneficiaries for the housing intervention.

Under the Grameen Sadak Yojana, out of total road length constructed to the tune of 23857.56 km since inception of the programme, a length of 12459.36 km of road was constructed during the last six years. Out of 14173 targeted habitations, 12679 are already connected through road network, and it is expected that the rest will be connected by March 2019.

Under State Maintenance Policy, 8602 km of old rural road have been brought under maintenance through funding from the state government only.

Anandadhara, the West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission, was formed and registered as a society on May 10, 2012 under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961, to initiate a major anti-poverty programme for the rural poor by organising women into Self Help Groups (SHGs). Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee launched the flagship programme on May 17, 2012. On programme intensification, it may be pointed out that the number of intensive blocks under the programme has increased from 32 in 2012-13 to 158 in the current financial year.

So far as capacity building and training of elected representatives and functionaries of Panchayats are concerned, training infrastructure has expanded across the state. Now there are one apex institute, five Extension Training Centres and 30 District Training Centres. The expanded training infrastructure has been regarded by the Government of India as one of the best in the country.



Here are some of the achievements of the Panchayat and Rural Development department:

Special status for Bankura

Award from the Union Ministry of Rural Development by coordinating other projects with 100-days work and creating model for enhancement of scope for earning livelihood in poor families of villages.

Path itself is the Pathfinder

A unique and unparalleled initiative was taken up on January 7, 2014, for creating 16,000 km length of road which can be used in all seasons in each of the gram panchayats. This special drive created about 3 crore 50 lakh of mandays across the state.

Gram Sadak Yojana

While up to 2010-11 an average of 1,069 km of road had been constructed under the Gram Sadak Yojana, the road-length constructed during the

tenure of this government becomes 1,978 km on average.

Nirmal Bangla

The 'Sanitary Lavatories' are being constructed in all the houses with the objective of building up Nirmal Bangla. Work for lavatories, solid and liquid waste management in schools and Anganwadi centres is going on.



My Home, My Right

The work for construction of houses for the rural poor families with the assistance of IAY Scheme is going on at a rapid pace. More than 10 lakh of dwelling houses have been constructed. Assistance for building houses under Adhikar Prokalpo was provided to 25 thousand families in 11 districts.

Anandadhara

More than 50 thousands Self-help Groups were constituted in the first two years of the new regime under its Anandadhara Scheme.

New ray of hope to the destitute, old, widow and differently-abled people

Allowance under the National Social Assistance Scheme is now much more easily available. 10.68 lakh of rural families are getting old-age pension. 7.39 lakh of rural women are getting widow pension. 38 thousand differently-abled people are also getting allowance. The amount of allowance for the widows and differently-abled people has been increased to ₹ 600 per month. Age limit for old-age pension has been reduced from 65 to 60.

To add further fillip to the tidal wade of development in the panchayats sector, the state government has set up Mobile Monitoring System using GIS for keeping an eye on the works being done at all the panchayats. This android phone-based monitoring system is already in place in the 3300 panchayats of the state.

Through this system, the Panchayat Minister and the officials of the State Secretariat at Nabanna can now monitor the works of the district officials based in the rural areas.

In another first, the state government has provided android-based mobile phones equipped with GPS technology to all the district officials responsible for panchayat development. The officers of the panchayat department are now visiting rural areas to train the panchayat workers to upload the developmental progress details through their mobile phones every 15 days.

The rural officials are now uploading pictures of every projects undertaken by the panchayats at regular intervals, including those of the Gram Sabhas. The pictures and records are being uploaded on the Panchayat department website and are thus accessible from any part of the world.

The West Bengal government has allotted ₹ 1.65 crore for the project. The mobile phones to be given out cost ₹ 5,000 each.

The glorious tale of development in Bengal's rural sector would remain incomplete without the mention of the one more initiative taken up by the department, the unique *Para Boithak* (neighbourhood meetings) drive. This initiative will become a national model, said the Director General of the National Institute of Development and Panchayati Raj under the Union Ministry of Rural Development on March 2, 2018. This initiative has been formally titled as 'Sahabhagi'. The state Panchayat and Rural Development department is now framing guidelines for the initiative that other states can follow. In this initiative, rural people can put forth their suggestions regarding development at these neighbourhood meetings. In Bengal, these meetings have witnessed huge participation of women, without whom any development in any sector in any part of the world is bound to remain lopsided and half-done. Here too, the state under the leadership of its first woman Chief Minister has shown that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow.

Urban Development
Building city life

Like in the rural development sector, the state government has also been pro-active in taking and implementing urban development initiatives right since the new regime took over in May 2011. And to speak of urban development, the first thing that crosses the mind is a new initiative altogether, the Green City Mission.

The Green City Mission launched by the Government of West Bengal for all cities of the state to make it future-proof, talent-friendly, investment-oriented through adopting sustainable, resilient, environment-friendly, livable, energy-positive, IT-friendly and safe programmes. Total 730 projects with total cost of ₹ 495 crore are in operation.

For upgradation of existing infrastructure and creation of new tourism attraction in planned manner, five new development authorities are constituted such as Gangasagar Bakkhali Development Authority (in 2013), Furfurah Sharif Development Authority (in 2015), Tarapith Rampurhat Development Authority (in 2015), Bakreswar Development Authority (in 2016), Patharchapuri Development Authority (in 2016) and Mukutmanipur Development Authority (in 2017).

Provisional permission for carrying out Integrated Township Projects at Sapkhali and Chakbagi Mouza under Bishnupur Police Station of South 24 Parganas by Ambuja Housing & Urban Infrastructure Company Ltd and provisional permission for carrying out township project for development of an 'Innovative Township' by Forum Properties Holding Pvt. Ltd at Jagadishpur Mouza under Rajarhat Police Station in North 24 Parganas have been granted.

The Maa Flyover, a 7.4 km elevated corridor has been erected over the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass to ensure an uninterrupted traffic movement from the heart of the city to Biswa Banga Sarani. Another flyover has been constructed on Eastern Railway mainline along with the approach road at Chandannagar. Besides, the rail overbridge has been constructed on A P Banerjee Road connecting Ghoshpara Road, Kalyani Highway in Ward no 5-8 of the Bhatpara Municipality.

Among the major water supply schemes,





14 in Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) and 34 outside KMA have been completed.

The construction of the Gitanjali Stadium , upgradation and renovation of Nazrul Mancha have also been done.

Other permanent assets built in the urban development sector over the last six years include the Eco-Tourism Park (Prakriti Tirtha), Rabindra Tirtha, Nazrul Tirtha, Mothers Wax Museum at New Town, all of which are the latest addition to the tourism map of Bengal. The list also covers the Storm Water drainage for South Dum Dum Municipality and other municipalities like Bansberia, Bidhannagar, Budge Budge, Baranagar, Kamarhati Municipality within Kolkata, the Gateway of Haldia, Satish Samanta Haldia Trade Centre at Haldia, Welcome Gate of Digha including illumination, the Hawkers Rehabilitation Centre, Beach front beautification work in front of Saikatabas and other places, the central bus stand, Digha Mohana Road, bituminous road at Sankarpur, Biswa Bangla Udyan, bituminous road from Digha Gate to Mandarmoni (Marine Drive), bituminous road at Tajpur and development of Drainage at Digha, the emergent road from Chemaguri New Bus Terminal to Gangasagar Mela Emergency Jetty on Battala River for Facilitating Pilgrims and local people of Sagar to avail the water route of Namkhana-Benuban-Chemaguri within Gangasagar Bakkhali Planning Area, Guest House at Prantik Township and Indoor Sports Complex within Sriniketan Shantiniketan Planning area, the fourth Mahananda Bridge & approach road at Siliguri. The beautification work of the elevated walkways at the Millennium park, the Baishnabghata-Patuli waterbodies, the Howrah Riverfront as well as the rejuvenation and development of Rabindra Sarobar Phase-I have also been done by the state Urban Development department.

The amendment of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Building Rules, 2009, has been made by incorporating the additional FAR in respect of green and other categories of buildings. Similar amendment of the West Bengal Municipal Building Rules, 2007, has been made. In both cases additional FAR of 10% for Green buildings and 15% additional FAR in cases of mass housing projects, hospitals, IT buildings, mega commercial projects etc has been granted.

The Unit Area Based assessment of Property Tax has been introduced in Kolkata MCA and relevant sections of KMC Act has been amended while necessary amendment has been made in West Bengal Municipal Act 1993 for introduction of Unit Area Based Property Tax Assessment System in all municipalities including NDITA.

Since 2011, construction of 99747 dwelling



units for economically weaker section have been completed and 56359 are under construction.

Total 186 movable and 22 stationary compactors with 18 hookloaders have been provided to 123 ULBs for better and voluminous transportation of solid wastes. The trans-municipal project for management of Municipal Solid Waste is in operation for six Municipalities in Hooghly district and 10 Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management Projects of 14 ULBs like Dum Dum, North Dum Dum, South Dum Dum, Baranagar, Bhatpara, Naihati, Ashoknagar-Kalyangarh, Habra, Krishnanagar, Santipur, Nabadwip, Jalpaiguri, Kolkata MC and Asansol MC with total project cost of ₹ 427 crore for generating Waste to Compost and Waste to Energy have been sanctioned and initiated under Mission Nirmal Bangla.

Special Cleanliness Drives have been taken up in the year 2016 and 2017 for seven days and 15 days respectively in all the ULBs with the aim of generating mass movement to develop a coordinated effort for keeping the environment of the cities clean, healthy, hygienic and beautiful in sustained manner.

60 City Livelihood Centres have been established in the ULBs for providing information on skill & livelihood development programmes to urban poor & unemployed youth and also to develop linkage between the citizen and citizen-centric service providers like electrician, carpenter, plumber etc.



For better traffic management, a Ring Road around NDITA Area has been constructed while a Link Road with New Town is near completion.

The online processing of Trade Licence and online collection of Property Tax has been made operational at NDITA.

New Town
A new dimension of development

Not merely a smart city. But an intelligent city. That's how it's being shaped up. That's what it stands for. New Town.

At the beginning of the implementation of the project, series of studies were made and reports from experts including environment clearance on the environment impact assessment were obtained. With the objective of developing an eco-friendly green-dotted new township, it was designed to develop the area in different phases. The area was initially divided into three Action Areas and a Central Business District.

At present Action Areas have been re-aligned. Besides the existing Action Areas, a Central Business District and resettlement Zone have been created. The New Town project is designed as a self sustained project with cross subsidy from HIG to LIG. For a projected population of 10 lakh and a floating population of 5 lakh, the plot price for MIG is the break-even price of land including infrastructure while the plot price for LIG is subsidized and HIG is at higher price.

The most striking approach of this project is that it is a self sustained one. The West Bengal government is implementing this project with direct control of all the activities through the fully owned government company, the HIDCO, without any budgetary support or allocation from the state or the central government. The project is designed as a self-sustained one with cross-subsidy from Higher Income Group to Lower Income Group or Economically Weaker Section. The process of incremental development is adopted in phases. Initial investment for Land procurement and development of basic infrastructure like land filling etc were started by obtaining advances from financial institutions. During the process of land procurement, earmarking of the salable plots are made. Advance payment against the allocation of land plot is received in the name of application money from the prospective allottees. Payment schedule of the plot price is so made that land will be developed with all infrastructure, and





repayment of advances obtained from the financial institutions will be completed. The approach is synchronization of all the activities like advances taken, time-bound project work of land procurement, development of infrastructure, receiving of price of plot as per payment schedule, repayment of loans and delivery of developed plots to the end users. HIDCO is the master planner and executor of the whole project under the guidance of the state government.

Standing on four pillars, as it were, the four hubs such as the Financial Hub, the Educational Hub, the Health Hub and the IT Hub, alongside featuring four major tourist attractions-the Prakriti Tirtha, the Rabindra Tirtha, the Nazrul Tirtha and the Mother's Wax Museum-New Town is by far the most happening domain in the sector of urban development in West Bengal at present.

Yet every present has to have some kind of a past, and New Town-in its new look, so to say-is no exception.

Let's go almost seven years back in time.

On May 20, 2011, Mamata Banerjee took over as the Chief Minister of the state. Exactly two months later, on July 19, 2011, she, on her way from the airport, got down from her car by the side of the New Town Major Arterial Road where lied 480 acres of land containing and surrounding 112 acres of waterbody, which was even larger than the Rabindra Sarobar in south Kolkata. With her profound vision of sustainable development, the new Chief Minister dreamt of converting the entire area into an ecological garden, which would be the first of its kind in the eastern region of India. And almost in no time, on December 29, 2012, was thrown open to the public what we all now know as Prakriti Tirtha, an eco-tourism wonder built up under the aegis of HIDCO, the Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation of West Bengal.

As HIDCO has been made the nodal agency by the new government for developing all infrastructure in the intelligent city of New Town like roads, drains, sewerage line, water supply lines, major beautification works and other related works as per the master plan, the organisation left no stone unturned in making the Chief Minister's dream regarding New Town a reality. And as a result, in exactly another year's time, on December 27, 2013, the Chief Minister was in a position to inaugurate a conglomeration of new projects in Prakriti Tirtha such as the Biswa Bangla Haat, the Children's Eco Park, the Musical Fountain, the Butterfly Garden, the Golf Play Area, the Bamboo Garden, the Fruits Garden, the Food Court, the Adda Zone, the Grassland, the Tea Garden, the Mask Garden, the Formal Garden, the Entrance Plaza, the Visitor Centre, the Amphitheatre, the Rabi Aranya, the Artists' Cottage, the Tropical Tree Garden, the Wild Flower Meadow, the Rose Garden, the Graffiti Walls, the Sculpture Garden, the Glass Hill and the Eco Island.

Of these, the Biswa Bangla Haat, one of the prime attractions of the park, is a one-stop centre for all kinds of traditional food, handicrafts, handloom and textile products, for which Bengal is famous not only in the country but all over the world as well, and by virtue of which Bengal connects to the world at large, and hence the name Biswa Bangla, christened by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee herself.

The Butterfly Garden consists of a large dome to enclose a plant habitat and perennials



around a circular body of water and is complete with butterfly life-cycle laboratory, interpretation centre, guided tours and the opportunity for the visitors to release newborn butterflies into the dome.

The Musical Garden here is India's first aquatic theatre and the largest floating fountain in the country. The Fountain can throw water jets up to nearly 30 m in height. Used for light and sound shows everyday, occasionally movies are also played on the water screen.

Spread over seven acres of land, the Eco Island at Prakriti Tirtha is situated at the centre of the lake and can only be accessed by boats. It consists of an amazing 2800 sq ft glasshouse with 360^0 view of the Park across the lake. In the idyllic location of the Eco Island, there are 22 two-roomed cottages and a cafeteria called Ekante, again christened by the Chief Minister. Visitors can enjoy three-star luxury stay in the lakeside cottages on booking and relish quality food highlighted by 70 authentic Bengali cuisines at the cafeteria. The authorities even offer a discount on the booking of all the cottages along with the glasshouse.

With varieties of migratory and rare birds coming to the area, Prakriti Tirtha is certainly a bird watchers' haven, too.

Apart from all these, other activities that the visitors can indulge in here include shikara sailing, paddle boating, kayaking, speed boating, water cycling, water safari on floating jetty, zorbing (land and water), duo-cycling, golf cart riding, angling/fishing and many else.

The vision for the new Eco Park, the Prakriti Tirtha, at New Town embraced a holistic and systematic approach to sustainability that seeks to create a balance between ecological regeneration, resource conservation, and optimization with the need to create a recreational urban open space. This approach offers an additional benefit as compared to traditional models for developing parks and urban open spaces, and the added benefit is the chance to create a 'living classroom', as they call it, about nature's gift. Here, as the wetlands are filtering water and the plants are filtering air, people can come to relax or rejuvenate, socialize or seek solitude, and learn first-hand how region's flora and fauna are benefiting their city.

Prakriti Tirtha presents an opportunity to create an urban community that values nature as an essential aspect in terms of the quality of life. The inspiration and enjoyment one gets from being close to nature cannot be denied. The benefits to physical and mental health are well known. However, even more important in an urban setting, ecosystems provide cities with resources that are critical for good urban functioning.

Another important feature of Prakriti Tirtha is that the entire park-including the Ekante cottages and the cafeteria-is manned and managed by HIDCO itself instead of going for outsourcing. With HIDCO preferring hiring local people on principle, there is no family in the nearby localities which does not have a member here at the park. Till now, more than 25 lakh people have visited the Prakriti Tirtha.

Moving out of Prakriti Tirtha, right beside the HIDCO Bhavan, one comes across in utter wonder and joy another grand edifice, the Rabindra Tirtha, which can well be called a Mini Santiniketan, developed as an alternative centre of art and culture.

Spread over five acres of land, Rabindra Tirtha was built in 291 days and was inaugurated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on August 7, 2012, the death anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. It was a sort of a homage by the present government to Tagore on his 150th birth anniversary. The project was announced on *Baishey Shravan* (the death anniversary of Tagore as per Bengali Samvat) in 2011 by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee when she gave the public a picture of what she had planned. And it was ready by the next *Baishey Shravan*, in 2012. The entire work was done at breakneck speed.

The guiding concept behind Rabindra Tirtha was to set up a research centre dedicated to the life and works of Tagore where scholars, researchers, students and enthusiasts could come together.

The institution is run by an experts' panel that comes with a task force headed by Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim. Its members include eminent men and women of letters like Jogen Chowdhury, Joy Goswami, Dwijen Mukhopadhyay and Shaoli Mitra.

The theme of the compound is rural Bengal featured by mud houses and wide open spaces. The oval-shaped complex is dotted with red-tiled cottages in earthy colours, green patches and coconut groves circling a large waterbody where there's a huge 13 ft statue of the great bard, which is a spectacle in itself.

Rabindra Tirtha tries to recreate a rural environment. To evoke the spirit of Santiniketan, even the flowers planted have been carefully chosen from those that find mention in Tagore's works.

The central auditorium is a neat dome-shaped 200-seater theatre with cushioned chairs, blue velvet soundproofing on the walls and a carpeted floor sloping towards a large stage built in a way to facilitate experiments with various audio-visual forms. With innovative lights and a state-of-the-art sound system in place, the auditorium hosts dance and musical programmes on Tagore, lectures and demonstrations. Local theatre groups and artistes have also been zeroed in on who regularly perform here.

The Exhibition Hall is divided into two chambers, with one housing the replicas of ink and poster colour paintings by Tagore while the other has the laminated photographs of Tagore at various stages of his life.

The other features of the complex include a film archive and cinema, a music archive, art gallery and library and the dormitories and guest cottages for students and guest lecturers with a total accommodation capacity of 80.

Next in line after Rabindra Tirtha is the Nazrul Tirtha, a 450-seat capacity auditorium of wonderful architecture, one of the first ten among the Asian auditoria.

As it was found out through surveys that people are willing to pay for comfort and quality, the government here went for providing with dolby digital sound system, 2K projector and the finest screen for the most economical price, ₹ 100, for Bengali cinema, ensuring better value for money. Modern popcorn machines have also been installed here in a bid to attract the younger generation to provide them with the multiplex amenities they are used to now.

The Nazrul Tirtha auditorium is fully computerised, and its box office has been in the 'book my show' website since day one. Blockbuster movies are screened here on a regular basis.

Adjacent to the Prakriti Tirtha, there is another wonder of New Town, the Mother's Wax Museum. On the 10th of November 2014, Kolkata joined the league of London, Berlin, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai and Bangkok in having its own wax museum. State Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee formally inaugurated the museum and dedicated it to the people.

The Mother's Wax Museum—like its world famous counterpart, the Madam Tussaud's—features lifelike wax figures of icons and celebrities. The wax sculptures have been created by Susanta Roy, a veteran wax sculptor based in Burdwan.

Apart from Mother Teresa, whom it is named after, the museum features the wax statues of



personalities ranging from icons like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and others to iconic film stars such as Suchitra Sen, Uttam Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, musicians like Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, Manna Dey, and sports personalities like Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly. International football icon Diego Maradona has also been featured in the wax galaxy.

Besides, not to be left out, is a section dedicated to the little ones. Bursting with energy as Spiderman lays his web of adventure, Batul The Great goes boasting off his strength, Chhota Bheem invites you to play and Doreamon is up for some fun.

The visitors here are provided with narrations recounting the achievements of each icon whose statue is exhibited along with props to create the appropriate ambiance. The visitors are offered opportunities to have their pictures snapped along with the extremely lifelike statues of their favourite icons.

There is also a large cafeteria adjoining the museum where visitors can have some refreshments while admiring the wide, panoramic view of the green surroundings.

As urban development has to be taken with a view to investment opportunities as well, the Financial Hub set up in New Town is of much significance in relation to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's dream of catapulting West Bengal to a big-ticket industrialised state in the near future.

With the overseas financial institutions such as this and also the multinational IT giants setting up or going to set up campuses in the satellite city, HIDCO wants to make its infrastructure full-proof and has decided to install the geographic information system (GIS) to have a complete computerized database of New Town. This will help integrate the database on the number of house owners, property tax, mutation, building construction as well as public utilities.

Before wrapping up, what deserves a mention is the most recent development in which the replicas of the Seven Wonders of the World have been installed at the Eco Park on November 12, 2017. The replicas of the seven wonders—Taj Mahal, Christ the Redeemer, Rome Colosseum, Great Wall of China, Easter Island statues, Petra Jordan and Pyramid—have come up on three acres of land. The facia of all the structures are made of fibre reinforced polymer which have been fixed on RCC and steel frames. Earlier, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had urged the Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO) authorities to set up these replicas, which, she thought, would be appreciated by those who love to travel. And her wishes have come true in every sense, one must admit.

So, all in all, one thing is evident. The Government of West Bengal is taking the concept of urban development to the next level. Like in many other erstwhile neglected sectors, in urban development too, a new horizon of hope has emerged in the last seven years.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Healthcare
Way to Wellness

Painfully amazing it is to digest how a state that had one legendary physician like no other than Bidhan Chandra Roy as its Chief Minister in its formative days after independence could fare so poorly in healthcare service for so long. Time went by, yet health infrastructure remained area left to be in doldrums, more pathetically so in the post-1977 era. And then came the year 2011, marking the arrival of one no-nonsense leader at the executive helm who speaks the language of the masses and relates to the agonies of the masses, and knows that having a proper healthcare system is one of the rudimentary pre-conditions for a state to move along the road to inclusive development. No wonder she would—in her very first press conference as the Chief Minister of the state on May 20, 2011—declare radical improvement in healthcare service to be one of the priority areas of her new government.

And she meant business. She kept the Health department to herself. She started making surprise visits to the government hospitals. She took up a slew of new measures to almost revolutionize the sector. And thus in the first 34 months of her rule, the state achieved what it did not even think of in the last 34 years. What were those? Let's check.

- Fair price medicine shops and Fair Price Diagnostic Centres, providing 48-72% discounts for all—a model for the entire country.
- A remarkable 20% decrease in the mortality rate of mothers during childbirth.
- Expansion of Sick Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) and setting up of Sick Newborn Stabilisation Units (SNSUs).
- Setting up of new Health Districts.
- New multi-specialty hospitals in districts.
- Supply of free medicines to all rural healthcare centres.
- Creation of new healthcare facilities that included arranging for free of cost easy transportation to hospitals for pregnant mothers and also children up to the age of one year.
- Launching of a new project called Sisusathi Prakalpa providing for free of cost surgery for children affected by congenital heart diseases.
- Special emphasis on paediatric treatment





setting up nutrition rehabilitation centres under the government-run healthcare system for the first time ever for children affected by malnutrition.

- Setting up of a Human Milk Bank named Madhur Sneha at the SSKM Hospital, the first of its kind in the entire eastern region of India.
- Establishing a Cord Blood Bank at the School of Tropical Medicine in Kolkata, again the first of its kind in eastern India, which would collect stem cell from cord blood and preserve after delivery. This measure was especially significant as this stem cell comes handy in treating many complicated diseases such as diabetes, kidney and liver dysfunctions, paralysis and cancer.



This was the estimate up to March 2014. Now, jump cut to another March. A couple of years later. What do we get? We get an altogether new concept, a brainwave of our lady at the helm. The concept of digital dispensary, through which access to primary healthcare for people in the rural areas of West Bengal got a new fillip.

This telemedicine venture was started in Mousani, a small island in Sundarban with around 30,000 inhabitants to begin with and went on expanding.

The venture works as a video-conferencing solution with doctors. The doctors use an artificial intelligence-based diagnostic and prescriptive tool that ensures quick and safe telemedicine consultations. The local gram panchayat extends its support by providing space in its own office.

A huge challenge lies in geographical access to the remote areas of the state, and Digital Dispensary is a commendable effort by the West Bengal government to overcome that challenge.

But the real overhauling of the health sector came



a year later as in a bid to usher in sweeping reforms in healthcare system in the state, the state government, on March 3, 2017, presented the new West Bengal Clinical Establishments (Registration, Regulation and Transparency) Bill 2017 in the state Assembly. The Bill, which aims to regulate the private hospitals and bring in transparency in the manner in which they operate, was later passed by the House.

On February 22, 2017, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in an unprecedented move, convened a meeting with the representatives of several Kolkata-based private hospitals and nursing homes at the Town Hall to take stock of their activities.

Mentioning that there have been "some serious complaints against many of the private hospitals" of the city, the Chief Minister had said in the meeting, "The people choose which hospital they will get treated in. Bengal is the gateway to North East India, Bangladesh and Nepal from where people also come here for treatment. Patients trust the hospitals with their lives. So they must be treated humanely. The treatment must be provided with ease and simplicity. This is a social responsibility."

She had also suggested that the private hospitals must maintain e-records of their patients and might start a budget section for the financially underprivileged patients.

Urging the private hospitals to treat patients, specially those from the economically weaker sections, with a smile, the Chief Minister maintained, "Hospitals are not a place for business. The state government is ready to provide full cooperation to you but not for fleecing the poor."

In that meeting, the Chief Minister had announced that the government would bring in a new Clinical Establishment Act. Pursuant



her promise, the new Act came into being in the Budget session of the Assembly.

The highlights of the West Bengal Clinical Establishments (Registration, Regulation and Transparency) Bill are as follows.

- From bed charge to cost of surgery or ICU charges, all packages must have a specific charge. Patients must not be charged more than what is mentioned in the rate chart.
- Additional costs, if any, during the course of treatment, cannot exceed a certain percentage of the package. The additional cost must be clearly specified in the bill.
- Every hospital must display the fixed rate chart.
- The e-prescriptions and all medical records must be given to patients.
- Help Desks must be set up to assist families of patients regarding any information about the bill or treatment.
- Hospitals cannot withhold the bodies of deceased patients if bill is pending.
- Primary treatment must be provided to accident victims before informing the police.
- Hospitals with more than 100 beds must start fair price medicine shops.
- If any hospital violates the new law, they will be fined ₹ 10 lakh or more. Government also has the right to cancel their license.

Speaking at the Assembly after the Bill had been presented, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Despite the huge debt burden, we are working for the people in order to beef up the healthcare infrastructure of the state. We have increased number of beds by 27000. We provide healthcare for free in government hospitals in Bengal. People from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, North East, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh come to Bengal for treatment. Procedures like MRI, Scan, X-Ray, blood tests and even dialysis are provided at much lower cost. As many as 112 fair price medicine shops providing up to 70% discount have been set up and 16 Mother and Child Hubs, 70 SNCUs, 303 SNSUs have also been set up. Institutional delivery has increased from 65% to 90% in last five years. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has been reduced from 32 to 26. Fair Price Diagnostic Centres and Dialysis Services have been set up at 46 state-run facilities. We have set up seven new health districts and seven new medical colleges. Children receive free cardiac surgeries under Sishu Sathi scheme. We have started breast milk bank. We have initiated Swasthya Sathi scheme. The number of seats have been increased at medical colleges."

Pointing out that the Bill has not been brought in a haste, the Chief Minister stated that the Health department had conducted a survey for one year before framing the content of the Bill.

The Chief Minister further said, "Some private hospitals are taking PAN cards and FD papers of the patients. We never heard of things like this. Some hospitals are overcharging the patients, making exaggerated bills. The greed is crossing all limits. This Bill aims at bringing transparency, ending harassment of patients and taking steps to stop medical negligence. This Bill also makes provisions for proper compensation in case of negligence by hospitals. Henceforth the private hospitals will have to start e-prescriptions and keep online medical records. They cannot charge more than the package for treatment. They must provide an estimate for additional cost and start 'Public Grievance Cell' to deal with the issues. The hospitals with more than 100 beds must start fair price medicine shops and diagnostic centres. The hospitals getting land from government must provide free treatment to 10% people. They must provide primary treatment to accident victims. Life saving treatment and medicines cannot be stopped even if a patient cannot pay. Dead bodies of patients cannot be held back by hospitals on the pretext that bills have not been cleared. The private hospitals not abiding by these rules will be charged with financial penalty and may also lose license."



As per the provision of the new Clinical Establishment Act 2017, a 13-member West Bengal Health Regulatory Commission was set up on March 27.

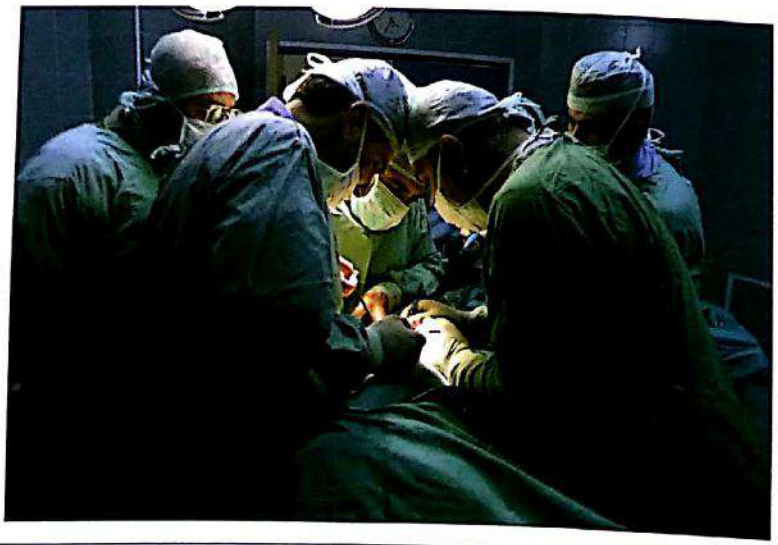


The Commission enjoys full administrative power along with quasi-judicial functions such as listening to appeals, holding hearings and also imposing compensations and fines as and when it would deem fit.

Common people from all walks of life hailed the Chief Minister's unprecedented move of formation of a Health Regulatory Commission to oversee the activities of the private healthcare facilities as a milestone in the annals of state administration. Words of appreciation, warm thanks and heartfelt gratitude came flooding from all corners.

Dipak Bhadra, a retired college lecturer, as we bumped on him at a Salt Lake park after his morning walk, said, "I myself am a victim of false billing as I had a knee surgery three years back at a private nursing home. At least a couple of the pre-surgery tests they charged me for had not been done in reality. Owing to lack of manpower in my family I could not do anything but to pay the money they claimed." Having shared this experience of his with us, he added, "I for one could afford the financial pressure. But there are people who might even have to sell their property to cough up the money." The setting up of a monitoring body such as the West Bengal Health Regulatory Commission was, thus, the "need of the hour", he reflected. "As a senior citizen of the state I bless Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for having taken such a bold step as this," the septuagenarian added.

Bhadra's was no way an isolated case. From Mainul Alam, a 40-year old small trader based in Maheshtala, to Aparna Dhali, a homemaker in her mid-thirties living in Ranaghat; from Rakhi Jaiswal, aged around 50, a bank employee living in Sovabazar, to Sanjay Mahato, a college student from Purulia, or Mohan Thapa, age 37, originally from Darjeeling and working as a security guard at a southern Kolkata highrise apartment house, every single one from different cross-sections of the society we talked to in this regard shared his or her experience of having been duped by private hospitals or nursing homes in one way or the other and was unequivocal in welcoming the Chief Minister's measures to put a reign on malpractices.



Following the setting up of the West Bengal Health Regulatory Commission to make private healthcare facilities accountable and bring in transparency, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has turned to beef up the government healthcare system further in order to make people's dependence on the private health facilities even less.

The process is a continuous one, this road to wellness. And the state driven by the leader of the masses is indeed on the fast track, the inevitable one or two odd pot-holes notwithstanding.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Women & Child Welfare

Ensuring the fair share

In her, West Bengal has got its first ever woman Chief Minister. A true mass leader who came up to the helm of affairs facing all odds, it was only expected from Mamata Banerjee that she, after becoming the Chief Minister, would go for a genuinely inclusive development, allowing a just share for the women who form the half of the populace.

Talking about women welfare, the first thing that obviously crosses the mind of anyone belonging to or even distantly aware of West Bengal is the scheme called Kanyashree, the peerless brainchild of the Chief Minister herself. Kanyashree has already gone a long way in curbing the number of school and college dropouts among the girls and it has accorded the womenfolk of the state a kind of new identity altogether. The Kanyashree scheme has attained recognition at many major international and national forums.

But apart from this, and also the other schemes and projects that touch the fate of the women as a part of the society, there are many other initiatives that the new government has taken up to address the issues relating women and child welfare. Here are some of those in a nutshell.

Education

For the first time, a university for women has been set up in Diamond Harbour. A state women's college for minorities is coming up in Ekbalpore,





Kolkata. Twenty-one hostels for women have been constructed in various polytechnics across the state. Through the state government's Sabooj Sathi Scheme, wherein bicycles are given to school children in rural areas, thousands of girls, too, have been benefited. Besides, over 8,000 girl students studying in Class IX in the Sundarban region have been given bicycles over the last five years. Around 40 Women's Corners have been opened in different government libraries and government-sponsored libraries to increase access to women readers.

Swabalamban scheme

Through the Swabalamban Scheme, training is given on a wide range of livelihood activities, e.g., zari craft, handloom weaving, beautician courses, community health, readymade garment-making, wood carving, etc. Recently, as a part of this scheme, the state government has launched an acting training project for sex workers, meant to make them self-sufficient by giving them acting lessons and making them employable in the entertainment industry.



Muktir Alo

Muktir Alo is a comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of sex workers. It provides them with opportunities for leading a life with dignity by providing them alternative career opportunities, and also gives protection to victims of sex trafficking.

Maternity leave

For the benefit of women, maternity leave for the state government employees has been extended. 'Maternity and Child Care Leave,' as it is called now, can be taken, in stages, for a total period of two years.

Security for women

Kolkata is one of the safest metros in India for women. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Kolkata is the safest city in India in terms of crimes against women. The India Today Best City Awards 2014 was



bagged by Kolkata in the category of crime and safety. Kolkata Police offers martial arts training to schoolgirls, under the Project Sukanya, to make them self-reliant when it comes to defending themselves.

Police stations run by women

The state government has adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach towards crime against women. The government is setting up police stations run exclusively by women police officers. As of now, the government has set up 30 Women Police Stations.

Anti-trafficking units

The state government has set up dedicated Anti-Human Trafficking Units and Special Juvenile Police units in each district.

Employment

More than 27,000 self-help groups have been formed over the last five years, which have over 16 lakh women members. Financial assistance to the tune of ₹ 200.07 lakh has been sanctioned for development of women's cooperative societies. The state has also created employment opportunities, including many for women, through skill development in various sectors. The Biswa Bangla initiative by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has also opened up a lot of employment opportunities for women. A lot of the handicraft workers in the rural areas are women, who are earning a decent livelihood. Women's participation in MGNREGA, in which the state has achieved unique milestones, has increased to 41%, which is all-time high.

Hostels for working women

To sort out the accommodation issues of working women, hostels have been constructed. A 40-bedded hostel, Ananya, has been at up in Durgapur and another 44-bedded one, named Swayangsiddha, in Salt Lake, Kolkata. Seven more are in different phases of construction all over the state.

The state government has also taken some major initiatives to combat the horrifying menace of women and child trafficking.

The West Bengal Task Force, which had been set up in 2007 with an objective of ensuring speedy repatriation of Bangladeshi child victims and reducing the period of unnecessary detention in homes under the Juvenile Justice (Care & protection of children) Amendment Act 2006, yet remained lying almost idle during the earlier regime, has been reconstituted by the new government in the year 2015 with the induction of the representatives from Kolkata Police and the related NGOs. The major area where the West Bengal Task Force face challenges in the repatriation process is family tracing and nationality verification of Bangladeshi children and women. To overcome this representative from Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in West Bengal has also been incorporated in the Task Force upon receiving the no-objection from the



union ministry of Home Affairs.

The Task Force has organised a district level orientation with the support of UNICEF on Operational Guidelines on Rescue- Safe return –Repatriation and Integration (RRRI) of Women and Child Victims of Trafficking and Cross Border Movement from Bangladesh on the 23rd and the 24th of June 2015 in Malda covering seven northern districts namely Darjeeling, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Murshidabad. The objective of this orientation was to orient all the stakeholders like District Child Protection Officers, home superintendents, child welfare committee members, juvenile justice board members, members of Border Security Force, NGOs on the Operational Guidelines on RRRI to create a better understanding on the RRRI processes and address the challenges faced by them.

The West Bengal Task Force has facilitated repatriation of 153 Bangladeshi children in this period in close collaboration with home superintendents, Home Foreigners & NRI Department, BSF & NGOs.

The Task Force has facilitated visit of representative from Bangladesh Task Force in five children's homes and shelter homes in West Bengal and conducted interviews with individual children and women to expedite the family tracing and nationality verification process.

Two of the Indian states that are most affected by trafficking are West Bengal and Maharashtra. West Bengal is a state of source, transit and destination of trafficking (including for cases of internal trafficking). Maharashtra is mainly a destination state and also experiences internal trafficking. With the support of UNICEF, the interstate MoU with Government of Maharashtra was signed to enhance the interstate cooperation between the two states. The objective behind signing this MoU was to ensure return and restoration of child and women victims of interstate trafficking by following the standard operating procedures. The MoU was followed and three women were restored in their families in North 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Kolkata.

The first interstate RRRI review meeting between West Bengal State Task Force and Maharashtra State Task Force held on January 14-15, 2015, with the support of UNICEF. The meeting engaged government officials, NGO members and Chief of UNICEF field offices from both the states. The SOP and MoU between both the states was signed on 30th May 2014. The SOP was piloted and an emerging need was felt for review of the process and planning for future. The objective of the two days interstate meeting was to review the implementation of SOP and road map, identify the challenges and plan and prioritise the key action in future between the two states in RRRI to enhance the interstate cooperation in prevention of trafficking in women



and children.

West Bengal Task Force facilitated return and restoration of 58 children from Palakkad, Kerala to Malda, West Bengal in July 2014. The children were victims of unsafe migration. West Bengal Task Force facilitated the liaison between the district administrations in Kerala and Malda. All the children were restored to their families and follow ups were done by the District Child Protection Unit.

In March 2015, West Bengal Task Force facilitated return and restoration of 57 children from Hyderabad, Telengana. These children were trafficked for labour and were forced to work in the bangle factory on a meager wages. Upon verification of their homes the children were returned with the cooperation of Government of Telengana and were restored in their respective families with the help of District Child Protection Units in respective districts.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal Child Development Women Development and Social Welfare department with the technical support from UNICEF organized a state consultation on prevention of trafficking in women and children on 17th July 2014 engaging members of State Advisory Committee on Combating Human Trafficking, members of West Bengal Task Force, representatives of civil society organizations. The consultation aimed at developing an integrated plan of action to combat trafficking and outlined the role of specific stakeholders to combat child and women trafficking in the state.

The State Consultation had representative from Department of Panchayat & Rural Development, Health & Family Welfare, Home Department, Kolkata Police, CID, Intelligence Branch, Department of Technical Education & Training, School Education, Mass Education, State legal services authority and 23 representatives from NGOs.

The consultation also engaged a plenary session on group work engaging participants and came up with a draft plan of action to combat trafficking which identified possible interventions focused on prevention to the "Causes" of trafficking and suggested mechanisms to respond to the effects.

West Bengal State Advisory Committee (SAC) to prevent and combat trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation has also been reconstituted in 201. The committee is

headed by the Minister of State (IC) Women & Child Development Department and with representation from all other departments.

The first meeting of West Bengal State Advisory Committee on Combating Human Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation, chaired by Shashi Panja, Minister, Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, was held at PWD Conference Hall, Nabanna on the 28th of January 2015. The meeting was convened by the Secretary, department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare and was attended by the Secretaries of the various convergent departments like Health & Family Welfare, Panchayat & Rural Development, School Education, Micro & Small, Medium Enterprises, Technical Education, Labour, UNICEF, Childline etc and Police to explore various avenues for combating human trafficking including prevention, prosecution, rescue and rehabilitation.


Monika Soren with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Sports & Youth Affairs Minister Aroop Biswas.

The state government's department of Child Development, Women Development & Social Welfare has already formulated a policy on rehabilitation of trafficked persons in West Bengal through a two-day state consultation with the support of UNICEF on the 3rd and 4th of July 2015. The policy aim towards:

a) Providing an environment free from all stigmas and discrimination to trafficked persons so that they can enjoy all the rights as is enjoyed by a fellow community member.

b) Positive discrimination in favour of the trafficked persons to ensure their mainstreaming with proper rightful rehabilitation.

c) Developing proper measurable indicators to assess their successful rehabilitation.

The policy clearly outlines the key priorities of the state under reintegration and rehabilitation and also came out with measurable indicators for successful rehabilitation.

The role of the district and block administration and of important stakeholders like department of health, department of labour welfare, Judiciary, Police has been stated clearly.

The policy is supplemented by a draft scheme which is focuses on the operational part of it. The draft policy and scheme are yet to be approved by the cabinet.

Education
A lot that happened to change the lot

Flashback: End of the first decade of the new century. If anyone, thoroughly impartial or even not, was asked to name a few sectors which had remained the most neglected over at least the last four decades or so, arguably the first that would come up as reply used to be education. It was a story of complete stagnation over that long a period.

Then the new regime took over in May 2011, and under the visionary leadership of new Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, it started to turn the scenario on its head. Today, in just a little over half a decade's time, the picture has become altogether different from what it used to be.

Let's now take a sectoral look at the sphere of education to enumerate where we were in the not-so-distant past and where we are at present.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Significant steps have been taken for improvement of Higher Education between May 2011 and May 2017, resulting in huge expansion. Sixteen new universities have been set up. Of these, seven are state-aided and nine are private universities. All are functional. Thirty one new government colleges and sixteen government-aided colleges have been set up, all being already functional. A new government college has also been sanctioned in 2016 at Narayangarh in Paschim Medinipur and is expected to start classes shortly.

As a result of the huge expansion in higher education, the state's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), which had been 12.6 in 2011, rose dramatically to 18 in 2016. The state's enrollment in higher education institutions has risen from 14,97,019 in 2011 to 19,52,696 in April 2017. This means an addition of 4,55,677 new seats at the UG and PG levels in the state during the last six years.

The annual expenditure under the Plan budget of the Higher Education department has gone up from ₹ 111.74 crore in 2010-11 to ₹ 465 crore in 2016-17, more than four hundred percent increase over five years.

A total of 2,816 teaching and non-teaching posts have been created in the state-funded universities, government colleges and government-aided colleges. Besides, a total of 5, 931 Assistant Professors were recruited by the state's Public Service Commission and the College Service Commission, thereby significantly improving the teaching standards in the state-funded colleges.





The West Bengal State Higher Education Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2013 was enacted with a mandate to provide a 17% reservation for OBC students (apart from 22% to SC and 6% to ST students. In 2014-15, the very first year of implementation, a total of 59,612 OBC students were admitted in the state's UG and PG level courses. During 2015-16, a total of 99,310 OBC students were admitted into the UG and PG level courses.

Indicating the steady improvement in the state's higher education institutions, as in May this year, 276 institutions have obtained UGC-NAAC's (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) accreditation while 95 institutions are awaiting NAAC's visit, to be assessed and accredited shortly.

To usher in the educational benefits of the internet, 732 virtual/smart classrooms have been set up in the state-aided universities, government colleges and Government-aided colleges at a cost of ₹ 22 crore. An e-learning space has been created in every state-funded higher education institution where free WiFi/ internet facility has been made available for the students and teachers during work hours. Several universities and colleges have also completed full campus WiFi coverage.

A major e-governance initiative has been taken to bring in greater transparency and fairness in admissions to all UG and PG level courses by making admissions online in all government and government-aided higher education institutions since the 2015-16 academic session. Each year, this benefits more than eight lakh applicants across the state. The salary accounts of all universities and colleges, too, have been made online, with funds being transferred directly into the beneficiary's account under the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) software. All fund allocation from the government is being done through the 'e-bantan' and 'e-pradaan' softwares under the Integrated Financial Management System. Besides, e-tender/ e-procurement in the higher education institutions has been made mandatory for any procurement above ₹ 5 lakh. Since the 2017-18 financial year, a new Pension Portal has been operationalised for the teaching and non-teaching staff of the government-aided colleges.

GIS mapping of the entire state's land use, land cover, drainage and infrastructure has been generated by the Science & Technology wing of the department. Further, GIS mapping of the 32 towns covered under the National Health Mission as well as GIS-based spatial digital mapping for Kolkata Police and Howrah Municipal Corporation areas have been successfully completed.

To meaningfully assist the meritorious students belonging to the economically backward sections of the population, the budget for the Swami Vivekananda Merit cum Means Scholarship Scheme, which was ₹ 45 crore in 2015-16 has been enhanced to ₹ 200 crore in 2016-17. This has increased the quantum of scholarships as also the number of beneficiaries in engineering, medical, technical and general degree courses besides students of classes XI and XII. During 2016-17, a total of 73,744 students have got the benefit of the scholarships.

In order to promote languages other than Bengali, the state's first Hindi-medium General Degree College at Banarhat, Jalpaiguri started functioning since August 2014. For the first time,



Santhali has been introduced as a subject in the State Eligibility Test (SET) conducted by the West Bengal College Service Commission in 2015. Urdu has been introduced in several colleges.

To recognise the contributions of teachers in universities and colleges, the state government has started the Siksha Ratna Samman award, in which public felicitation of outstanding teachers from higher education institutions is done on the Teacher's Day.

The state government has taken multiple measures for the welfare of teaching and non-teaching staff, and those are:

(i) Enhancement of retirement age of teachers of universities and colleges from 60 years to 62 years, with effect from 1/1/2017;

(ii) Grant of Leave Travel Concession (LTC) facility to university and college teachers;

(iii) Bringing the university and college teachers under the West Bengal Health Scheme (WBHS);

(iv) Conferment of Child Care Leave on female teachers of universities and colleges;

(v) Conferment of Paternity Leave on male teachers of universities and colleges;

(vi) Grant of advance increments for PhD/ MPhil and other higher Degrees to university and college teachers;

(vii) Treating the time spent by a teacher under the Faculty Improvement Programme as 'on duty';

(viii) Encashment of accumulated Earned Leave (up to 300 days) at the time of superannuation;

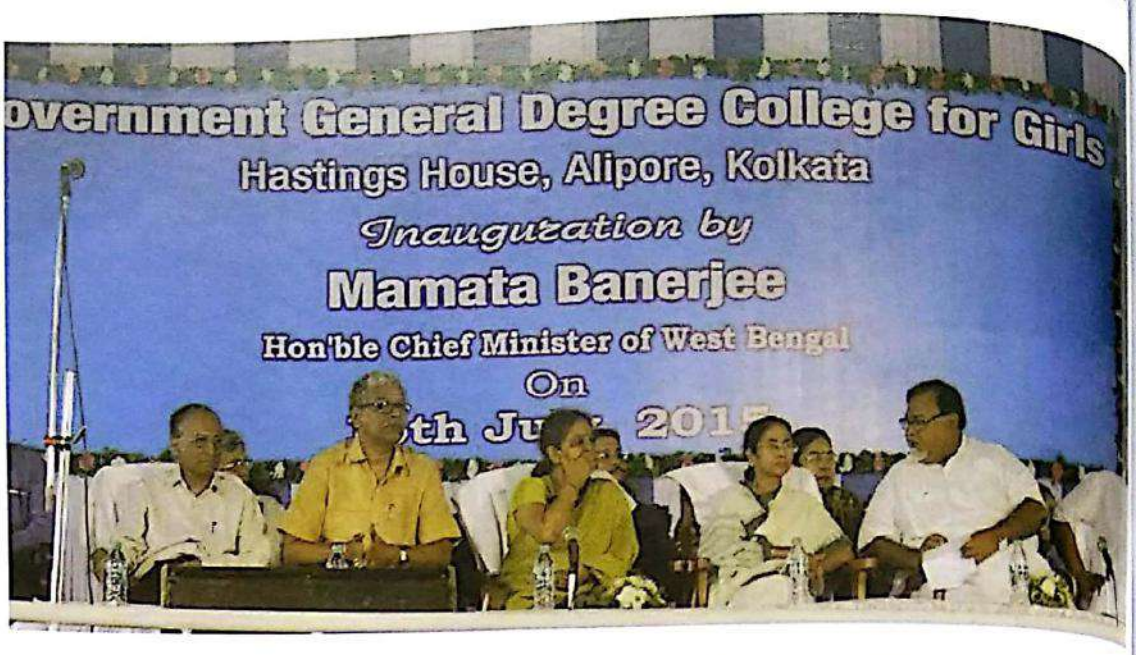
(ix) Conferment of teaching status on Librarians, Deputy Librarians and Assistant Librarians of government-aided colleges, and Graduate Laboratory Instructors (GLIs) along with all attendant financial and service benefits including Career Advancement Scheme and leave encashment of 300 days;

(x) Allowing College teachers to act as Guide for MPhil and PhD students in terms of UGC Regulations, 2016;

(xi) Conferment of the benefit of 'Study Leave with Pay' on government-approved Part Time Teachers (PTTs), Contractual Whole time Teachers (CWTTs) for acquiring higher Degrees such as PhD;

(xii) Enhancement of the upper age limit of government-approved Part Time Teachers (PTTs), Contractual Whole time Teachers (CWTTs) for applying for the post of Assistant Professor through the West Bengal College Service Commission, from 37 years to 42 years while also giving weightage for 'teaching experience' in the interview;

(xiii) Bringing the government-approved Part



Time Teachers (PTTs), Contractual Whole Time Teachers (CWTTs) and casual non-teaching staff under the Swasthya Sathi Scheme;

(xiv) Conferment of Group D/non-teaching employee status upon hostel and mess employees of state-aided universities and colleges along with the attendant benefits of pension, GPF, encashment of leave salary etc.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

The sphere of school education has also got equal importance in the new regime since 2011.

The Government of West Bengal is providing free text books to all students of Pre-Primary to class XII. Total no of textbook titles are 296. Nearly 9.5 crore books are printed and distributed annually.

Specially designed Braille textbooks are given to all visually challenged students.

50.32 lakh primary school students were provided with school shoes free of cost in last one year.

The School Education department provided free school uniform to all Class I to VIII students each year.

Mid Day Meal to 1.2 crore elementary level students is provided on daily basis involving the self help groups.

50426 Primary school teachers have so far been recruited in Primary Schools while 27,572 teachers were recruited in upper primary and secondary schools.

All schools are provided with safe drinking water and toilets.

As a new initiative, e-classroom infrastructure has been provided in 2000 secondary schools in last one year while recreational infrastructure (seesaws, swings and slides) was provided in 990 primary schools in last one year.

To develop academic infrastructure, 93064 additional classrooms were constructed in schools in last six years while new buildings of 531 newly set-up primary schools, 3966 newly set-up upper primary schools, 2706 SSKs and 166 MSKs have been constructed in last six years.

In 3915 secondary schools, 39300 computers were provided to encourage the use of computers as a vehicle of teaching.

In last six years, 564 Junior High schools have been upgraded to High Schools while 1909 Secondary Schools were upgraded to Higher Secondary schools.

In 3014 schools, Library Grant to the tune of ₹ 15.46 crore has been provided to develop library infrastructure, and in 3714 schools Laboratory Grant to the tune of ₹ 62.11 crore has been provided to develop laboratory infrastructure.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The state government, in the new era over the last six years, has attached considerable importance to technical education, training and skill development.

West Bengal is now among the few states having an integrated Skill Development Policy, wherein the West Bengal Skill Development Mission chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is providing the policy guidance while the Paschim Banga Society For Skill Development



(PBSSD) under the Chairmanship of state Chief Secretary is the coordinating agency for skill development in the state.

On February 16, 2016, Utkarsh Bangla was launched as the flagship scheme for skill development in the state. The Project, Non-Project as well as RPL mode interventions in Utkarsh Bangla have already started and 491570 youths have already trained.

West Bengal was selected as the Best State at the All-India Skill Competition organised by the union government for the year 2016. It may also be mentioned that the state had topped the competition in the year 2013 for the first time and followed it up in 2014 as well.

The Government of West Bengal has adopted a policy of ensuring one Polytechnic in each subdivision of the state. In 2011, only 26 subdivisions of the state had a total number of 65 Polytechnics while in 2017 the total number of operational Polytechnics across the state has reached 146. The intake capacity in Polytechnics, too, has now gone up to 37315 as compared to a total of 17185 in 2011. The e-learning contents have already been developed for 50 subjects and are being taught since 2015-16. Out of the 146 Polytechnics of the state, 60 have been converted into WiFi campuses. The E-Yantra Labs have been set up at five government Polytechnics on Robotics in collaboration with IIT Mumbai.

At par with the Polytechnics, the state government has adopted a policy of ensuring one ITI in each block. In 2011, only 39 blocks of the state had a total number of 80 ITIs while in 2017 total number of operational ITIs across the state has reached 235. Biennial intake capacity (on account of four semesters) of the ITIs has now gone up to 66710 in comparison with total intake of 17636 in the year 2011. It may be further mentioned that 71 of the government ITIs have been operationalised in 2016 -17 in the public-private partnership (PPP) mode.

Since the new regime took over in 2011, the state Technical Education department has constructed 11 Skill Development Centres, of which the SDC at Midnapore is being utilised for short-term course through Tata Metaliks Ltd. Other 10 SDCs will be utilised for short-term courses through different industrial houses and organisations. Four more SDCs are being set up.

So far as vocational education is concerned, at present 24560 students are pursuing it under NSQF Programme from Class IX (Level-I) to Class XII (Level-IV) in 289 schools. Additional 311 schools will start NSQF Programme shortly.

Under the West Bengal Handloom Circuit Development Scheme, launched in 2014, three-tier skill development and efficiency improvement programme has been introduced in collaboration with the state Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Textile department with the objective of imparting skills and technology upgradation in the handloom sector. As many as 63185 trainees from the weaver families have completed different modules of training in 75 Skill Training Centres. Besides, 63 Advance Vocational Training Centres in 62 subdivisions across the state have been operationalised in collaboration with the state Animal Resource Development department.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Darjeeling
The Healing Touch

"You give us peace, we will give you prosperity."

No prize for guessing who the speaker is. Right, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. But where and on which occasion did she say this? There lies the real page-turner.

It was March 13, 2018, and she was inaugurating a two-day Hill Business Meet at Darjeeling.

Yes, a Hill Business Meet at Darjeeling—today's Darjeeling where the business community can flock to discuss investment opportunities without fear and worries. This Darjeeling is created by her.

And there she was, bringing the smile back on the snow-capped mountains—as if with a magic wand—within only two months after assuming the office of the state Chief Minister. On July 18, 2011, the Gorkha Territorial Administration was formed, and the rest was history.

"Today I am in Darjeeling.
"My darling Darjeeling is always very charming.
"It is my sweet home
"Drawn by the beauty of the place and love of the people, I have come here nearly 40 times.
"My full Government of West Bengal team is with me today at Darjeeling.

"I have laid the foundation stone of a unique North Bengal Wild Animals Park, which will come up near Siliguri on the way to Darjeeling.
"The animals will roam around freely in open spaces of about 297 hectares and can be seen by visitors during safari rides in special vehicles.
"It is indeed good news for our nature and wildlife lovers and tourists of the country and abroad who can enjoy African Safari experience in this ₹ 250 crore project that will come up in less than two years.

"Drinking water is very scarce in Darjeeling. During the months from January to May and during peak tourist seasons, the town faces acute water scarcity.
We have set up a Water Supply Project from river Balason. Today, I have commissioned the project. Water from this project will be supplied to Darjeeling town and surrounding areas through





pipe network which will be set up very soon. At the moment, the existing pipeline will be used for enhanced water supply.

"For convenience of tea garden workers in particular as also other workers of North Bengal, we are setting up a North Bengal Office – "Shram Bhaban" of Labour Department. Today, I have laid foundation stone of this office building.

Our Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board set up earlier is doing excellent work for the Lepcha community.

"For the Tamang community, we have today announced formation of a Board to work in a focused manner for development of Tamang brothers and sisters and preservation of their rich heritage.

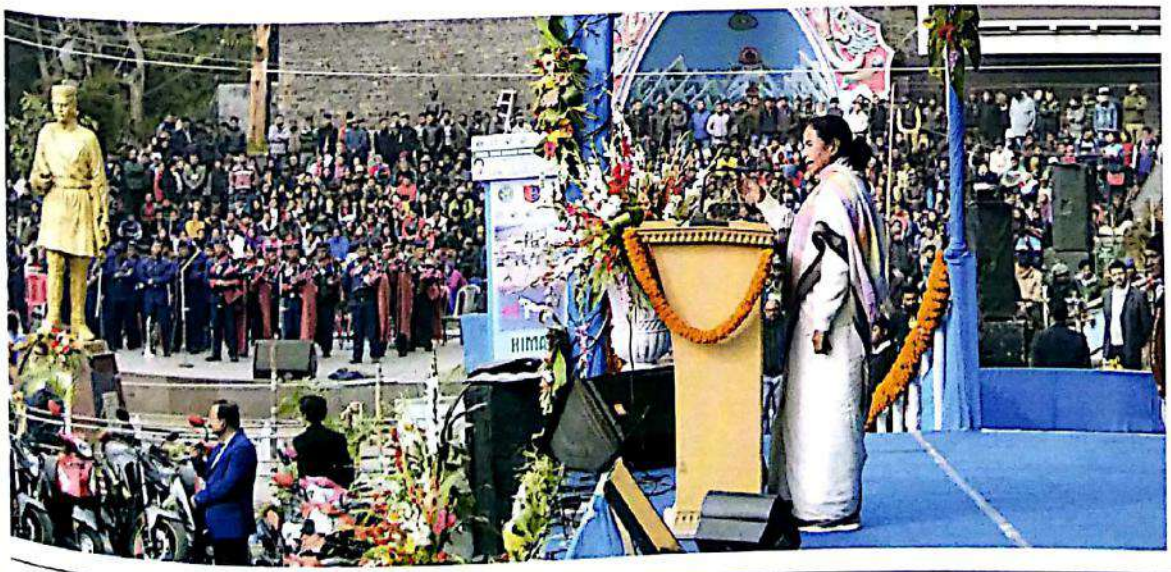
"My best wishes to all of them."

This is what Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote on her Facebook Page on July 17, 2014. Note the date. It was exactly three years after the GTA had been set up. And also note the enumeration of works done in that rather short period of time, which would only go on multiplying itself over the rest of her tenure so far, coming at the threshold of completing seven years. Resultantly, today's Darjeeling, yes, can afford holding a full-fledged business meet, winning the confidence of a community that seeks for peace and stability for their own materialistic interest more than anything else, and why not.

But does this mean that the journey has been bed of roses all through these seven years? No, there indeed were the occasional hiccups as the disruptive forces have constantly been at work in a bid to destabilize the hills.

"You must maintain peace in the region for a better future, for the youth, for students, for everyone. If tourists do not come to the Hills, how will the economy of the region prosper?"

She had to reiterate these words on February



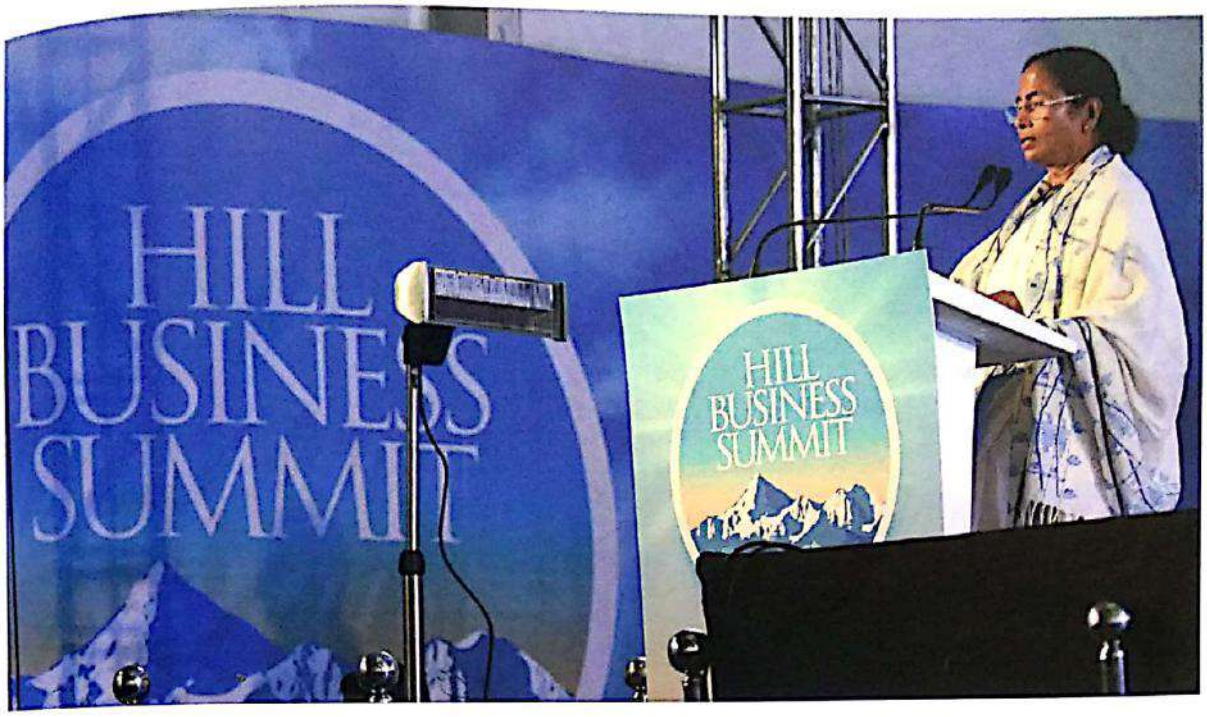


7, 2018 as the divisive and hostile forces had put up a 104-day strike and blockade up there, which forced her to visit the hills after a gap of seven months while she usually frequents Darjeeling in a space of two-three months.

"Sections with vested interests do not want people of Darjeeling to be happy. "Whenever we work for the development of the hills, they create violence and the process is pushed back by 10 years. No one can buy-out Darjeeling with money power. You have to win hearts. And the state government has done just that. We want development of the hills. We want welfare of the people. We want peace. We want jobs for the youth."

She said these while speaking at the prize distribution ceremony of the Himal-Tarai-Dooars Sports Festival featuring martial arts, archery, football and volleyball tournaments organised by the state Youth Affairs and Sports department and participated by as many as 18,500 athletes—comprising both men and women exponents—belonging to 805 clubs from the districts of Darjeeling, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Kalimpong along with those from the areas under the jurisdiction of Siliguri Police Commissionerate.





Pointing out that Darjeeling has ever been a popular tourist destination all over the world, the Chief Minister stressed, "There is a great potential for Information Technology sector in the hills. There is a large young educated population here. Besides, we have to focus on traditional strengths of the hills such as horticulture, tourism and the rapidly expanding homestay sector. We will contact the industry doyens so that new industries are established in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The industrial meet in March would be the first step towards that."

Her plans to establish IT industries in the hills comes from the fact she has gathered beforehand that a large Gorkha population from the hills work in the BPO sector in the IT hub of Sector V in Kolkata and in other parts of the country. This is the way she addresses an issue, in its complete array from all corners.

This holistic approach of hers was also reflected in the separate meetings she convened with the top representatives of different political parties of the hills, including the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the All India Gorkha League and also with the chairmen of thirteen local development boards at the Darjeeling Raj Bhavan the next day of her tour.

"There may be ideological differences between political parties but we have to keep the differences aside and work together for the development of the region. Let us all forget the bygones and work together for the future." This was her message to the hills party leaders.

She announced jobs for youths of the disbanded Gorkhaland Police force and also announced that the teachers would be paid their salary pending for three months, the duration of the recent strike.

"We have given appointment to youths who have done well in the police sports festival as civic police volunteers. We will also give similar jobs to those GLP youths but they must not have any police records. The teachers will also get their pending salary but they must conduct extra classes to make up for the three-month loss," she said, reflecting the carrot and stick approach she had to take up such a complex problem as this.

"The state government does not interfere in the workings of the GTA. We respect people of all castes, creed, communities and religion. GTA was created for the development of the region. Local leaders are running the GTA and Bengal Government is providing them all the cooperation. Put an end to the politics of bandh. You can always make your demands in other democratic ways," she added in her characteristic simple-yet-stern way, the mystery behind all her success in negotiating with the hills issues ever since she took over as Chief Minister.

"Tourists are coming back to Darjeeling. This is a good sign. Let Kanchenjunga keep smiling."

Let's sum up with these words of hers.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

North Bengal
Focused development

Neglect brings forth isolation. She was quick to understand this, the basis of the crises prevailing in the northern part of the state when she assumed the office of the executive head of West Bengal in May 2011.

So, wasting no time, within a couple of months, she, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, addressed the key issues of the area on the other side of the Farakka Barrage by setting up of a separate department titled North Bengal Development in her government–the first of its kind in the state–on July 8, 2011.

Another significant administrative measure that she made for North Bengal came in less than three years' time when Uttarkanya, the picturesque new state secretariat exclusively for north Bengal came into being on the 20th of January 2014. This made West Bengal the second Indian state after Jammu and Kashmir with a dual secretariat system.

The establishment of Uttarkanya, comprising an auditorium with 400 seats and a guest house apart from the administrative building on an 11-acre plot of land at Siliguri, fulfilled a long cherished dream of the people of north Bengal as they would not have to travel to Kolkata for administrative nitty-gritty any more.

Besides, as part of more administrative reforms, new districts of Alipurduar and Kalimpong have been set up in the region and various Development Boards have been formed for the socio-economic development of people of different tribes of the hills.

To bolster the administrative setup in North Bengal, yet another administrative building, named Dooars Kanya, erected at the cost of ₹ 50 crore, has been inaugurated by the Chief Minister in Alipurduar, which will accommodate 40 administrative departments. The Teesta Terai Utsav and the Kalimpong festival were held with overwhelming participation from the locals. The Uttar Banga Utsav is being held annually, which has not only proved to be a resounding success but a fitting reply, too, to those indulging in disruptive activities to create chaos and anarchy.

These apart, several macro-level and micro-level projects from all sectors of activities have also been taken up by the new state government in its new North Bengal Development department over the last seven years. Some of the important achievement made by the department during this period are enumerated here.



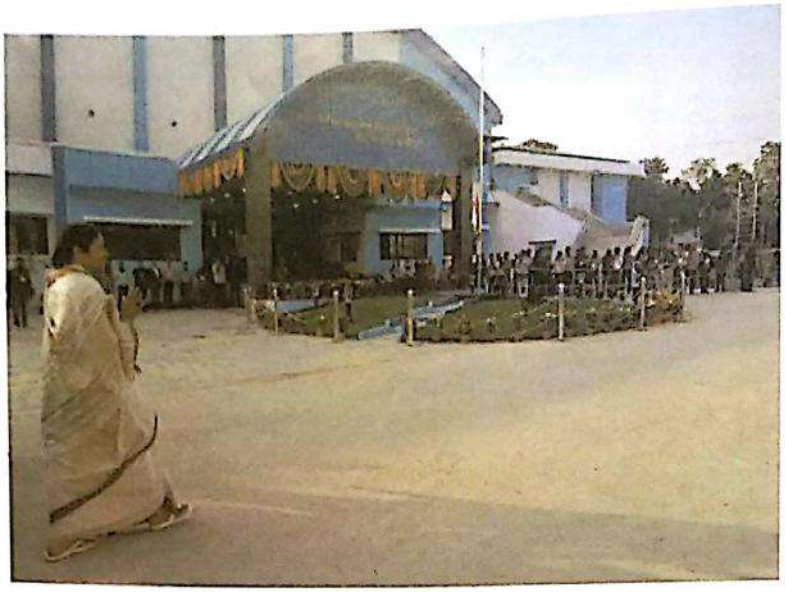


Roads & bridges

- Construction of Bailey bridge at Bijanbari, Darjeeling has been completed.
- Construction of Bhatnala Bridge under Chopra Block, one of the incomplete scheme of UUP, has been completed.
- Construction of bridge at Lahil under Goalpokhar-II Block, incomplete scheme of UUP, has been completed.
- Construction of Netarghat Bridge over river Pitani under Goalpokhar-II block, incomplete scheme of UUP, has been completed.
- Construction of Bridge (on pile foundation) at Kahalai (Channel) at Hemtabad, Uttar Dinajpur, taken up by the department at an estimated cost of ₹ 386 lakh has been completed.
- The construction of three new major road scheme in Uttar Dinajpur District viz., i) construction of road from Churamohan to Lalganj, ii) construction of road from Baitola to Joyhat, iii) construction of road from Barodighighat to Lalganj taken up by the Department at an estimated cost of ₹ 1264.68 lakh have been completed.
- For the construction work of alternate road for Jalpaiguri from Siliguri via Eastern Bypass–Sahudangi–Ambari Falakata-Belacoba-Gosala three Ghumti have been completed.
- The construction of RCC bridge over river Sahu at Kholachand Fafri village, Salugara, Jalpaiguri, have been completed.
- Construction of RCC bridge over river Sahu at Choto Fafri village, Salugara, Jalpaiguri, have been completed.
- Construction of Hanskhali Bridge at Chopra has been completed.
- Construction of bridge over river Jhumur at Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri has been completed.
- Construction of bridge over river Kalua, Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri has been completed.
- Construction of bridge over river Mara Raidak at Salbari II GP, Coochbehar has been completed.
- Construction of other major bridges viz,. at Parharipur over river Sui , bridge near Kacchua High Madrasah over river Gamari, bridge over river Punarbhaba at Balikapur-Kardaha road, Dakshin Dinajpur, bridge over river Kaljani in Coochbehar and bridge over river Sahu at Jugvita under Dabgram Fulbari, Jalpaiguri are at various stages of completion and are expected to be completed shortly.
- 65% of the construction of Bhutni bridge (1.8 km long) at Manikchak, Malda at an estimated cost of ₹ 9897.00 lakh have been completed.

Education

- Construction works of six new Government Colleges (Dhupguri, Ghoksadanga, Nishiganj, Banarhat (Hindi), Manikchak & Chopra) have been completed. Construction of Kumarganj college is at final stage of completion.
- Construction works of three ITIs taken up by the department, projects funded by the Technical Education & Training department and the Minority Affairs & Madrasah Education department at Kumarganj, Kushmandi and Chopra have been



completed. Construction of ITI at Khoribari, under Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad has also been completed.

- Extension works of Rajganj College, Dewanhat College, Baxirhat college & APC Roy college have been completed.
- The constructions of the Panchanan Barma University (phase-I) at Coochbehar has been completed.
- The construction work of Engineering College (phase-I) at Coochbehar has been completed.
- Development works of Fathema & Mary Gorethi Schools at Birpara, Jalpaiguri have been completed.
- Construction works of two degree colleges at Naxalbari (Hindi) and at Ghosepukur, Phansidewa, under Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad have been completed.
- Repair, renovation and extension works of the Lilawati College at Falakata and Netaji Subhas Mahavidyalaya at Haldibari are at final stages of completion.
- Repair, renovation and extension works of Birpara College at Alipurduar has been completed.
- About 70% works of the construction works of Polytechnic College at Sujapur, Malda, has been completed. It is expected to be completed within December, 2017.
- Construction of Polytechnic College at Mathabhanga, Coochbehar has started.
- Construction of new academic building of Jaigaon College and Alipurduar College will be taken up in the current financial year.

Sports

- Upgradation of sports village at Jalpaiguri, a flagship project of the department, has been completed and handed over to the Sports & Youth Affairs department. At present it has been taken over by the Sports Authority of India.
- The work of construction of Indoor Stadium at Alipurduar, having 5000 seating capacity, has been completed.
- Detailed Project Reports for the construction of Stadium at Falakata, Alipurduar, Coochbehar and Chanchal at Malda is underway. All these projects shall be taken up for execution in the current financial year once the DPR is finalised and the concurrence of the Finance department is obtained.
- Detailed Project Reports for the installation of Flood light and the compound lighting of MJN Stadium at Coochbehar and of Brindabani Playground at Malda are at final stages of completion. These projects shall be taken up for execution in the current financial year once the DPR is finalised and the concurrence of the Finance department is obtained.

Tourism

- The North Bengal Development department, in collaboration with the Tourism and the Forest departments, has established one tourism hub at Lamahata, Darjeeling, and this was inaugurated by the Chief Minister on January 29, 2013.





- Repair and renovation of Morgan House, Hill Top & Tashiding Tourist Lodges at Kalimpong, tent accommodation at Jaldapara and Moorty have been completed.
- Development of Chilapata Village in Alipurduar for making it into a place of tourist interest has been completed.
- Development of eco-tourism & picnic spot surrounding Damdama Jhil at Bhogramguri, Mathabhanga, Coochbehar with an estimated cost of ₹ 468.36 lakh has been started.
- An amount of ₹ 182.06 lakh has been allotted to Ram Krishna Sewa Ashram for the renovation works of Roy Villa at Darjeeling. Memoirs of Sister Nivedita, during her stay at Darjeeling, and other valuable records have been kept there. There is a proposal to include this into a tourist map of Darjeeling.
- Work of the development of Parade Ground at Alipurduar has started.
- Supply & installation of Toy Train within the premises of Surya Sen Park at Siliguri has completed.





Cultural

- The construction work of Natya Utkarsha Kendra at Balurghat is nearing completion.
- Renovation works of Rabindra Bhavan, Raiganj have been completed.
- The work of vertical extension along with construction of boundary wall of Jalpesh Guest House at have been completed.
- Infrastructural developmental works of the Ekramia Isale Saoab Mazaharsharif (Huzur Saheb) at Haldibari, Coochbehar has been completed.
- Renovation works of Dinbandhu Mancha at Siliguri has been completed.
- Renovation works of Rabindra Bhavan at Shaktigarh, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri has been completed.
- Construction works of state-of-the-art auditorium at Coochbehar is at final stage of completion.
- Construction work of auditorium at Alipurduar has started.
- Detailed Project Report for the construction of auditorium at Tufanganj, Coochbehar and Rabindra Bhavan at Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur have been finalised. These two projects shall be taken up for execution in the current financial year once the DPR is finalised and the concurrence of the Finance department is obtained.
- An amount of ₹ 517.00 lakh has been allotted to the District Magistrate, Malda, for taking up the major repair & renovation works of Rabindra Bhavan at Malda.

Infrastructure Development

- Improvement of Shantinagar Underground Drainage Scheme at Dabgram, one of the major schemes taken up by the department at an estimated cost of ₹ 1700.00 lakh has been completed. About one lakh population of that area have been benefited.
- The construction work of Multi-Disciplinary Civil Defence Centre at Hathighisa, Naxalbari has been completed and it's been handed over to Civil Defence department.
- Construction of Central Bus Terminus at Malda has been completed.
- Construction of Market Complex (phase-I) at Gangarampur, Dakshin Dinajpur has been completed.
- Construction of a two-storied Building of Garidhura Police Outpost, Kurseong, Darjeeling has been completed.
- Special repair & renovation of Richmond Hill at Darjeeling has been completed.
- Construction of a two-storied building comprising the office of the DSP Traffic & Police force Barrack at Bidhannagar, Phansidewa, has been completed.
- Special repairs & renovation including allied works and electric installations of the Sukna Forest Rest House has been completed.
- Construction of a six-storied Guest House of the department at Himanchal Vihar-Phase II, Matigara has been completed.
- The construction work of electric crematorium at Alipurduar has completed.
- The construction works of electric crematorium at Balurghat has been completed.
- The construction works of electric crematorium at Dabgram, under Rajganj Block is nearing completion.
- Branch offices of the department have started functioning at Raiganj, Malda, Buniyadpur, Kurseong and Coochbehar.



- Construction of Bus Terminus at Buniyadpur, Harirampur (with market complex) and at Buniyadpur has been completed.
- Construction of new market sheds of 11 Haats in Coochbehar district is at the final stage of completion.

Drinking Water Supply Schemes

- Works of the ground water based water supply scheme for Kilaram, Ketugabur, Bara Muniram-Surajbar, Saubar and Choto Muniram (Part) and its adjoining Mouzas under Naxalbari Block under Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad have been completed.
- Water supply scheme for Budhsingh Mouza and its adjoining areas under Khoribari Block of Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad has been completed.
- Works of ground water based water supply scheme for Faudigach Mouza and its adjoining mouzas under Phansidewa block under Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad has been completed.
- Water supply scheme for Mouza Bhisti, Bhubangurir Chat, Chaupukuria, Dalur Chat, & Hallal under Phansidewa block under Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad have been completed.
- Water supply scheme for Banshidharpur, Kalipur, Kadambini TG and Raichenga under Falakata block, Alipurduar, is at final stage of completion.
- Surface based water supply scheme located at Buxa Fort area in Dooars region, Alipurduar is at final stage of completion.
- Installation works of three deep tubewells with pump & plumbing machines along with three pump houses for augmentation of supply of drinking water in different wards of Jalpaiguri Municipality has started.
- Installation works of three iron elimination plants in Jalpaiguri Municipality for the supply of safe drinking water supply have been completed.



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Jangalmahal
The Saga of Mainstreaming the Marginalised

Jangalmahal. Once synonymous to terror and turmoil. Now to dream and determination.

There was a time when the very mention of the name of the region 'Jangalmahal' used to instantly evoke a sense of horror in public mind. But that is history now, that pre-2011 phenomenon. In the West Bengal that we live in at present, there is a magician at the helm who, through her political insight, could easily find out the wand of a near-revolutionary turnaround in the Maoist-infested area of the state, and that was development.

Years of under-development and even non-development had kept the vast region under the cover of terror. It was she, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who was the first to realise that only applying force and providing no healing touch for the poor and the downtrodden would only end up complicating things. And so, as soon as she took over as the executive head of the state, initiated the process that had so far been even unthought of, the process of development of the area and mainstreaming of the people in arms.

But she did in reality have no magic wand in her hands. So she had to work. Had to take up schemes and projects for the area and to reach them personally. She was the first Chief Minister who spent a night in Jhargram after the insurgency as none of her predecessors had dared to even stay late following the terror threat. On the contrary she did not hesitate to move around and interact with the people, even often keeping the protocol aside, getting down from her car and mingling with them, asking them how they were and how they thought they should be. And not for once. Time and again she has toured the area since May 2011, convened administrative meetings right at the heart of once-so-dreaded





Jhargram, distributed patta of land and launched new government projects.

And why only Jhargram? Mamata Banerjee became the first Chief Minister of West Bengal since independence to visit—on January 7, 2018—Amlashole, a village, which had been in news ten years back, in 2004, due to starvation deaths. By then a lot has changed in the villages like Amlashole, the sheer existence of which had been ignored during the earlier regime. During Left Front rule, Amlashole made international headlines for starvation deaths; yet within only two and a half years after regime change in the state, that spectre changed, the villagers started getting rice through the public distribution system at ₹ 2 per kg, the village got roads and drinking water facilities reached the people.

The new Chief Minister chose this village to spread the light of development. The main purpose of her visit to the village was to launch the `all weather rural road network`, where 1 km road was being constructed in all the 3349 gram panchayats across the state.

The Chief Minister, on her way to Amlashole, got down from her cavalcade and interacted with the local people, inquired about their problems, and walked to the village.

While addressing the people gathered at Amlashole, she reminded the people of her earlier visit, before having come to power, and said that she was aware of their plight. She asked the members of the local administration to form plans



for developing the area with immediate effect.

Addressing the villagers, she in her own unique way of communication said, "I welcome all who are present today. I have not come here to hold any meeting. I came here to see the area and hand over some government benefits and services. Today we are constructing 16,000 kilometers of village roads across the state. One road is being constructed here. This will be a concrete road and will connect the village with Purulia as well as the state of Jharkhand. Students in this place need to travel a lot for going to school. We will set up a Madhyamik-level school in this region. The area you live in is a beautiful place. The area boasts of jungles, hills, waterfalls; there are has huge tourism potential. A huge population in this region is poor. I have visited Amlashole in past. At that time people were dying of hunger. I am happy that the Amlashole that was in the news for deaths because of hunger can now avail rice at ₹ 2 per kg. We have given the people of this region food security. We need to do a lot of work in the sectors of health, education and employment generation. There is shortage of drinking water. We are setting up a proper system for water supply. 71% of the people here belong to Scheduled Tribes. A number of families in these areas have already completed 85-95 days of work in the 100 days' work scheme. We are willing to give them 200 days' work. It is necessary for the people so that they can be self-sufficient and fend for themselves. I am instructing all the government officials in these areas, from the District Magistrate to the BDOs, to visit the villages repeatedly and conduct surveys regarding welfare schemes. Every aid meant for the people should be provided immediately. I want the people of Amlashole, Kankrajhore, Binpur, Banspahari or Belpahari to be well-off; the flood of development should reach these places. Today we have launched the construction of 16000 kilometers of rural at 3349 Gram Panchayats across the state. Work of constructing 1 km road in every Gram Panchayat has started today. In future, with the help of PMGSY, there will be roads connecting farmlands and crop markets. We have selected the places located in the interiors of the districts for this, because they have been neglected for years. Jungles are our environmental wealth. Let there be no bloodsheds in these places. These should not be any disturbance here. Let people live well. Peace will bring prosperity for all. We have to cautious and not let some hardliners take advantage of poverty and sow seeds of violence in this area because if there is peace, your children will be safe. This region has always been violence-prone.







Today is the anniversary of the tragic massacre at Netai. I never forget these dates. I request all of you to make the Kanyashree project successful. Do not marry off your daughters before the age of 18. Let them study and be self-sufficient. I request my brothers to help our sisters and help them move forward. We have also included Olchiki language as the medium of examination for Government jobs. You the residents understand best what is required in the area. We will see through your eyes, listen through your ears, feel through your heart and then do the work. Compile all your needs, submit a plan, and I will ensure the work gets done. The ADM will be sending plans of development for these areas within 15 days. I wish you all to be well. People from these areas who once lived under abject poverty, dissociated from mainstream, will one day show the way to the world. I wish you all to be in good health and spirits."

But she knew her visits would have to be backed up by consolidated efforts on the part of the state government, and hence she has set up the new department of the state government specifically for development of the area, the department of Paschimanchal Unnanyan.

The Paschimanchal Unnanyan department has, under the Chief Minister's direct guidance and supervision, taken effective steps to accelerate the development of 74 under-developed blocks of the region. Projects have been undertaken in the sectors of irrigation, agriculture, health, supply of drinking water, preservation of land and water, education, employment generation and the like.

The of irrigation canals, irrigation ducts, deep tube wells and river lift irrigation (RLI) systems have been renovated. Construction of check dams and water retention structures in the area were taken up under 'Jaltirtha' project. More than 200 projects for the conservation of land and water have been accomplished through the creation of jorbandhs, digging and renovation of ponds, and levelling of barren band.

More than 400 concrete, bituminous and paved roads and bridges, including small and big roads, along with culverts and small bridges, have been constructed. Among these are roads in Jangalmahal constructed under different projects, as announced by the Chief Minister.

The farmers have been encouraged to cultivate onion and turmeric by non-conventional methods. The project was implemented with the help of scientists of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya. Lac cultivation in the district of Purulia has been extended, by which over 5000 families have benefited.

More than 1200 tubewells have been sunk and purified drinking water supply projects have been set up at the rural health centres.

Over 5000 houses for economically backward people have been constructed under the Gitanjali Scheme initiated by the new government in its Housing department.

New universities, degree colleges, ITIs and polytechnics have been set up throughout Jangalmahal. The ICDS centres of the area can now boast of their own buildings. Hostels for school students, both boys and girls, have been constructed and development of school infrastructure through setting up laboratory and library buildings, toilet blocks, boundary walls etc has been done on priority.

In the health sector, the highlights of development have been development of rural health services, construction of nutrition



rehabilitation centres (NRCs), construction and renovation of hospitals along with providing them with Special Newborn Care Units (SNUCs) and arranging mobile medical camps. Other schemes such as infrastructural development of Deben Mahato Sadar Hospital, Raipur Rural Hospital, Blood Bank at Khatra S. D. Hospital, upgradation of Lokeswarananda Eye Foundation at Para to a Referral Eye Hospital and construction of Nursing Training School at Lalgarh have been taken up.

Financial assistance has also been provided for the construction of a tourism centre on the foothills of Susunia Hill.

Such tidal waves of development at the micro level have been ably matched with initiatives at the macro level, too.

Jangalmahal is now model of development in the country. People of this area are availing of all kinds of facilities provided by the government like rice at ₹ 2 per kg or work for 100 days. Now Jangalmahal Sports and Jangalmahal Festival are being held regularly. To upgrade the human relationship and to encourage sports and cultural talents, the state government has been arranging the Jangalmahal Cup football tournament and the Jangalmahal Festival since 2011. Every year thousands of competitors from different clubs of the area participate in football, cricket, kabadi, tennis, archery, athletics etc. To encourage the participants, different eminent personalities from the field of sports of the state also attend the prize distribution ceremony along with the Chief Minister herself. Many folk artistes from Bankura, Purulia, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur districts and of course the new district Jhargram also present colourful performances at the Jangalmahal Festival. Thousands of youth of the area have been included in the police force in various capacities. In her second term in the government, in 2016, the first Administrative Congregation of Chief Minister was held at Narayangarh in Jangalmahal. Not only this, her first Administrative Meeting in the second lap was also held in Jhargram in the year 2016. The Chief Minister also flagged off the unique scheme Sabooj Sathi from Jangalmahal. It has been decided that every year two cabinet meetings will be held in this area. Jhargram and Paschim Bardhaman have been upgraded to the status of district and Manbazar and Jhalda of Purulia district have become Sub-divisions. The Chief Minister inaugurated these on April 4 and 7, 2017, respectively.

No wonder, terror and violence that Jangalmahal had once been marked by is now a thing of distant past. Several fire-branded terrorists have surrendered to the government, some leading ones in front of the Chief Minister herself at the state secretariat.

The people of Jangalmahal do not consider themselves outcast or outsiders any more. They are not hiding and firing any more. They are coming out of the dark and taking part in the process of development and tasting the fruits of development being equals with their fellow citizens across the other parts of the state.

This mainstreaming of the marginalised is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, milestone of the saga that is being written in the state since May 2011.

Sundarban
From inaccessible to accessible

With the aim of developing communication facilities in 19 blocks of Sundarban region across the North and South 24 Parganas districts, double-soling, concretisation and brick-laying of over 600 km of roads have been done along with the construction of almost 162 km of metaled roads.

A concrete jetty has been built at lot no. 8 for the benefit of pilgrims to Gangasagar Mela and also for the people of the Sundarban region including Sagar Island and Kakdwip.

- Ninety jetties have been built to facilitate water transportation in important places in Sundarban.
- To connect the different islands of Sundarban to areas of the main land, four bridges are on the verge of completion and plans for six more have been taken up.
- With the objective of developing irrigation and sanitation, silt has been dredged out of almost 39 km of canals.
- 1369 deep tubewells have been installed to get rid of problem of inadequate drinking water in the region.
- A programme was taken up to develop and extend sporting activities in Sundarban, with the twin initiatives of Raidighi and Canning Sports Complexes. Of these, Raidighi Sporting Complex is ready and Canning Sporting Complex in under construction.

Income from crops is increasing

- In order to increase the intensity of crop production of this region for the sake of developing the economic condition of farmers and to increase the yearly income of poor peasants, sunflower seeds, moong seeds, vermicom post fertilizers, chemical fertilizers, and elephant gourd and other vegetable seeds have been distributed to 1.63 lakh small and marginal farmers. Besides, 35,000 of them have been provided with sprayers and paddy thrashing machines.
- More than 8000 ponds have been dug under various water conservation and land development projects in order to bring more land under irrigation.

More emphasis on pisciculture

- To encourage fishermen of the Sundarban region, nearly 10,000 of them have been provided with fish-fodder and lime.
- Approximately 4050 people have been trained in more advanced methods of pisciculture.

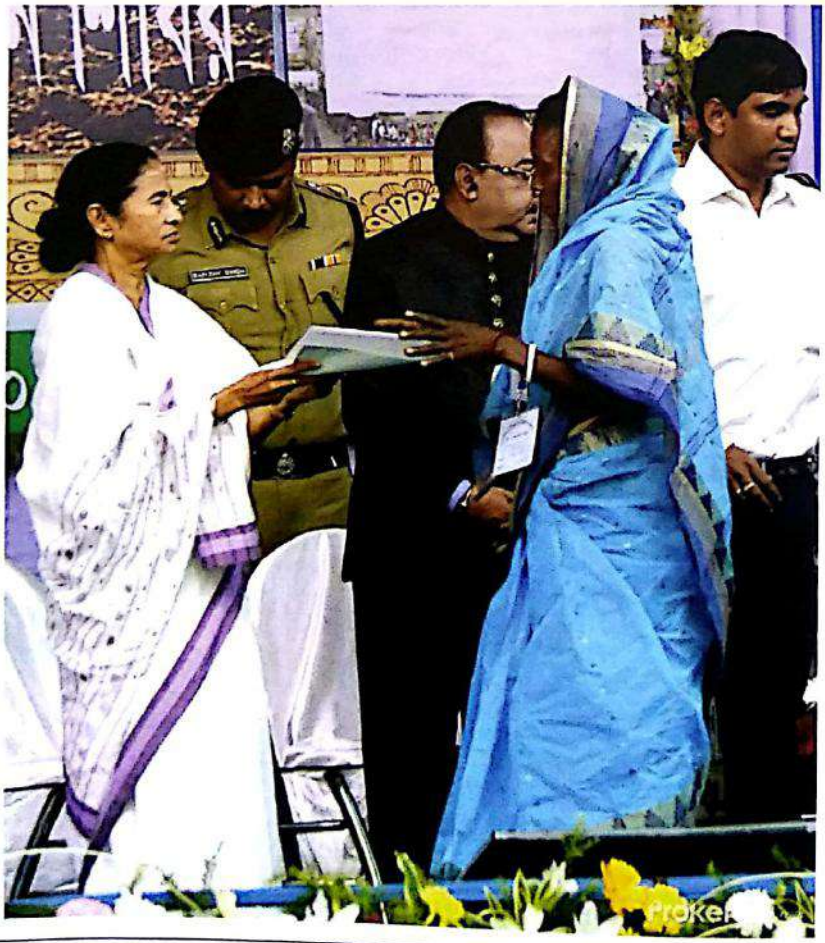
Sundarban growing greener

In order to maintain the environmental balance of the sensitive biosphere of Sundarban,





afforestation on 1600 hectares of marshy land, and of tamerisk (jhau) on 875 hectares of land, has been done,



More new tourist spots

An initiative has been taken for the overall development of Sagar Island and the surrounding islands for eco-tourism activities, and for maintaining the Kapil Muni Temple, with financial assistance of about ₹ 48 crore from the World Bank.

The facility of conventional electricity has been extended

- Conventional electricity has been supplied to 23 mouzas.
- Work for supplying conventional electricity through WBSEDCL to 45 more mouzas is going on in the riparian blocks of Gosaba and Patharpratima in Sundarban.

Development of the infrastructure of schools

In view of the extension of education to the riparian islands of Sundarban, infrastructure such as libraries, additional classrooms, hostels, lavatories, etc has been constructed in the local schools.

Tourism
Inviting the world

West Bengal is a land of scenic beauty as well as rich cultural heritage. While on the one hand, the state can boast providing tourist attractions such as snow-capped mountains, wildlife, sea beaches and historical sites, on the other hand, in the field of entertainment, Bengal has been a frontrunner from cinema to theatre, literature to philosophical works. The last three and half years saw a surge in the tourism sector with numerous newer projects having been commissioned and completed. We may go into a detailed overview of this sector in two categories, general tourism and cultural tourism.

General Tourism

From the majestic hills at Darjeeling to the beauty of Dooars, the historic places at Burdwan, Murshidabad, the temples of Bishnupur, the forests at Jangalmahal, the Ayodhya hills at Purulia, the vibrant city of Kolkata, the world's largest mangrove forests of Sundarban—a UNESCO World Heritage site—and its Royal Bengal Tigers, the holy place of Gangasagar and the virgin beaches of the Bay of Bengal, the state has it all. In fact, no other state in India has got such variety of tourist attractions. You just name a feature of the nature-except only for the deserts-or an area of tourist interest, you have it in West Bengal.

Tourism has ever been the priority sector for the new government in the state since its inception in 2011. The budgetary allocation has been increased considerably in every financial year, and proper infrastructure are being put to place. Here are some of the new major initiatives and achievements of the state government over the last three and half years.

Jhargram Rajbari Tourism Complex

- Construction of Tourist complex at Jhargram Raj Bari and improvement of surrounding and development of Eco-Tourism facilities near Kakrajhore and development of trekking route from Knakrajhore beat office to Bholabheda Range office in Paschim Medinipur.

Art and Craft Museum complex at Ghurni

- Construction of Art and Craft Museum complex at Ghurni and construction of four Hats in Krisnanagar.

Ayodhya Pahar and other places of Purulia

- Construction of several accommodation facilities and watchtowers in and around Ayodhya Pahar (Kharaberi, Sankupi, Ayoydhya hill top etc).





- Development of Pakbidra and Matha Tourism Project in Puncha, Purulia.
- Development of Garhpanchokot Tourism Complex and Muradi Eco Tourism Project.

Birbhum

- Construction of cottages at 'Amar Kuthir' and Bakreswar, construction of several tourist facilities at Bakreswar Hot Spring area, Birbhum.
- Construction of Welcome Gate at Joydev Kenduli and Pathar Chupuri.

Bankura

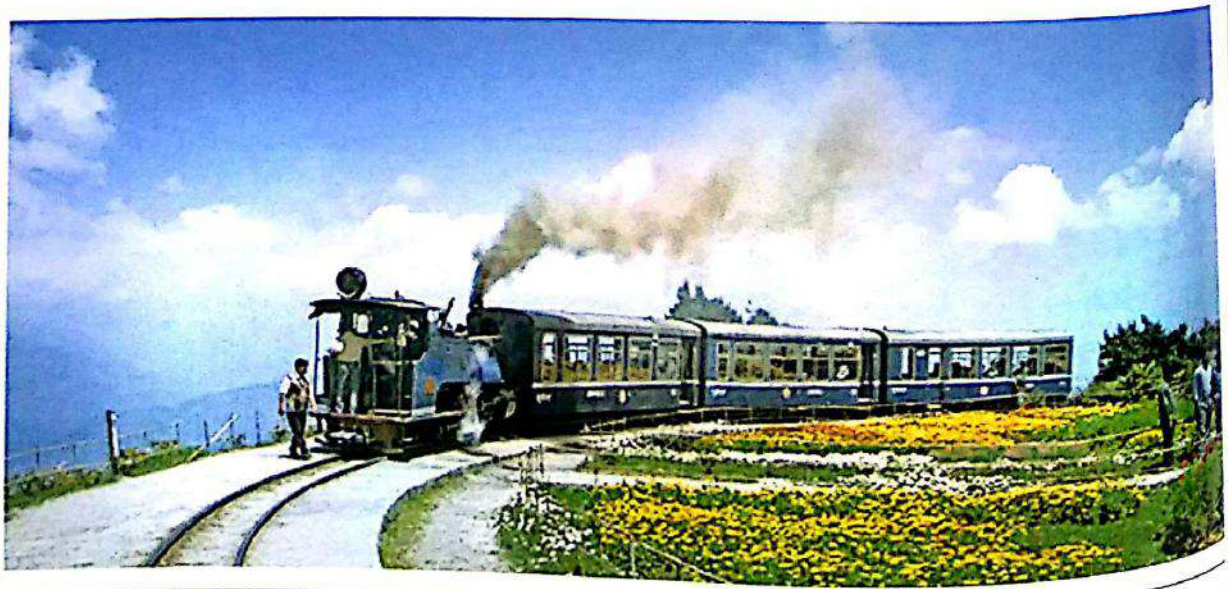
- Construction of cottages, dormitory, restaurant and open air stage at Chatna Block and several tourism projects at Mukutmanipur, Beharinath, Sushunia in Bankura.

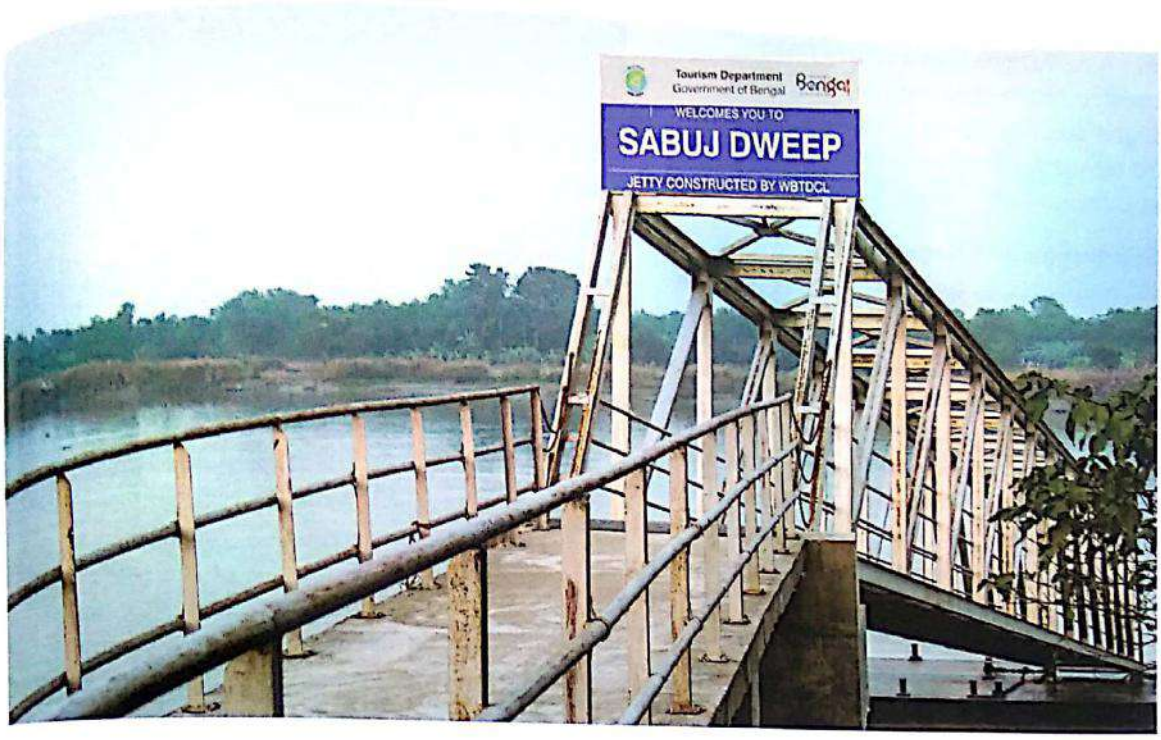
Plassey

- Construction of Main Gate to Warrior Samadhi and construction of five cottages and dormitory at Plassey.

North Bengal

- Construction of Loghuts and Nature Interpretation Centre at Tilabari and construction 10 numbers of cottages at Batabari, Jalpaiguri.
- Construction of last mile connectivity and arrangement of power supply and other infrastructure development works for Mega Tourism Hub at Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri.
- Development of North Bengal Wild Life Sanctuary.
- Development of Ray Villa in Darjeeling.
- Construction of new tourist spots and accommodation centering Gourdighi, Mahipal Dighi and Tapan Dighi and construction of Tourist Lodge at Gangarampur in Dakshin Dinajpur.
- Development of Kulik Forest.





- Development of Tribhumi Eco Tourism Park, Dhupguri.
- Development of homestay at Magurmari, Sitong, Tinchuley, Pokrihatar, Takdha Khasmahr Villages in North Bengal.

Durgapur

- Construction of State Institute of Hotel Management in Durgapur.

Development & Beautification of Tourist spots

- Renovation & Beautification of Kolkata riverfront, Shahid Minar, Burmese Pagoda at Eden Garden, Island of Mayo Road, General Tank of Brigade Parade Ground, Monohar Das Tarag.
- Renovation & Beautification of Ramkrishnna Samadhi Prangon and meditation building at Cossipore Mahashamshan, Illumination of Dakshineswar Kali temple etc in Kolkata.

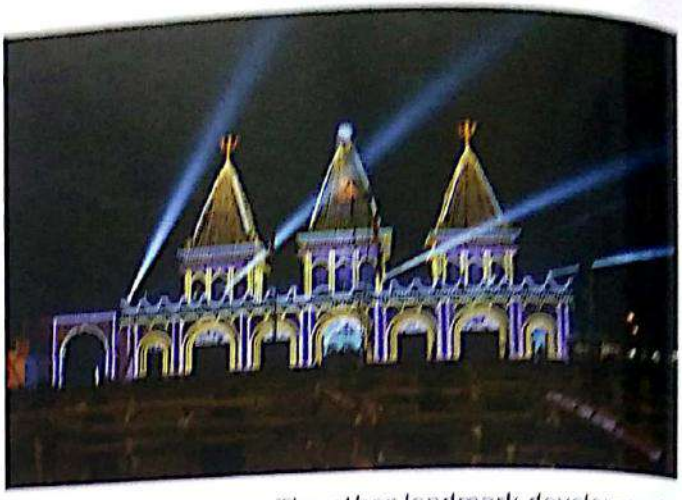
Motijheel Tourism Destination project

- Construction of several infrastructural facilities including Cottages, guest house, landscaping, beautification etc at Motijheel Tourism Destination project in Murshidabad.

Gajoldoba-Jharkhali-Sabujdwip

- Tourism is being developed under the PPP model in Gajoldoba, Jharkhali, Sabujdwip. New eco-tourism parks, lodges adventure sports and other projects are being undertaken. Tourism parks are being created in Saili, Kunjanagar and Jaldapara. A tourist lodge is being constructed at Jhargram Rajbari under PPP model.





Digha-Mandarmoni-Tajpur

- A new Digha gateway has been constructed. A road marine drive between Digha and Mandarmoni is being planned. 36 tourist cottages have been constructed in Udaipur.

Sundarban and Sagar Island

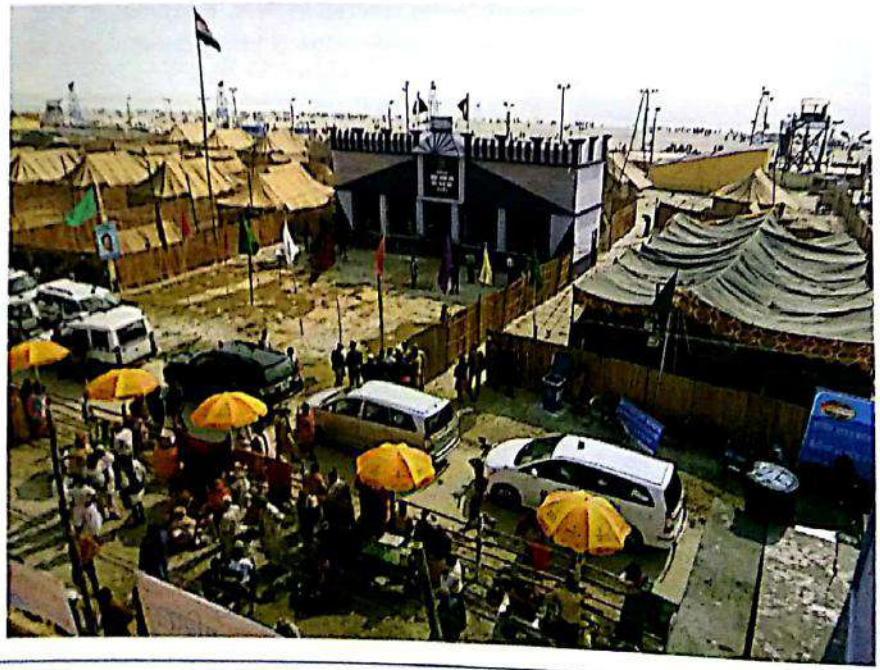
- One of the largest remaining mangroves areas in the world, Sundarban has exceptional biodiversity in terrestrial and marine environments. It is home to a significant population of the globally endangered Royal Bengal Tiger. It includes a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests. The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Royal Bengal Tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python. Recently, a magnificent bridge of 1 km length over the river Mridangabhanga has been constructed. 168.47 km of brick-paved roads and other bituminous and concrete roads, jetties and deep water tube-wells have been completed. The electrification of the islands and strengthening and repairing of embankments has also been taken up in a big way.

Gangasagar

- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee recently visited Gangasagar with a team of industrialists. A new deep sea port will be set up here with an investment of ₹ 12,000 crore. Three new beaches were named as Dheusagar, Rupsagar and Bhorsagar. The other landmark development activities made in the Gangasagar tourism circuit includes creation of several infrastructural facilities, like construction of 100-seated Tourist Lodge and 20-bedded cottages, development of road, car parking, lighting arrangement, food court etc, construction of guest house at Ramganga and development of road for Jharkhali eco tourism hub.

Jangalmahal

- A circuit tourism is being set up in Paschim Medinipur district, involving Jhargram, Belpahari and Hatibari. The project includes the development of Kankrajhore, Ketkijhora, Gurasini Hills, Ghagra Waterfalls, Ratneshwar Temple etc. Murutbaha Eco-Park is being built in Susunia Hills. Two circuit tourism projects, one involving Bankura, Susunia Hill, Saltora Range, has been taken up, and the other for Ayodhya Hills, Khayraberia and Murardi Dam are in the pipeline. These apart, special emphasis has been given to cultural tourism, heritage tourism and homestay tourism. A lot of beautification projects have also taken place. A new eco-park and a new wax museum has been opened in Rajarhaat. Besides, the state Tourism department has currently been working on three major PPP projects, for which this department has constructed several supporting infrastructural facilities like road, power supply, water supply etc, incurring cost of several crores of rupees.



Power
Lighting up the state

West Bengal would be a state where there would be power supply to each and every household, and there should be no powercuts anywhere. This was what she dreamed on assuming the office of the Chief Minister of the state back in May 2011. And after seven years of her rule, we can well say this has been a story of dream come true for Mamata Banerjee. Electrification has reached almost 100% villages of the state through grid connectivity, of which in case of 100 char villages process is on providing electricity through Solar Photovoltaic (PV) plants.

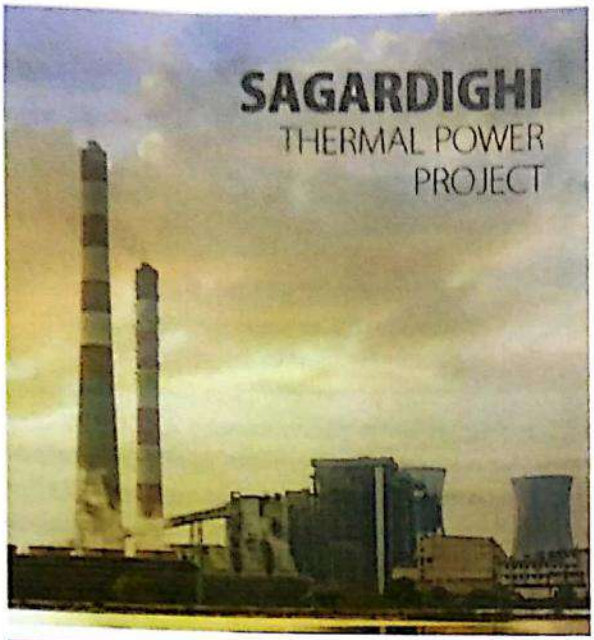
Bengal is among the few Indian states today to have surplus power which is a major achievement as it has been viewed by many. Production of power in the state has gone up in the last few years. And not only that, West Bengal is now exporting 1,000 Mega Watt (MW) electricity to various neighbouring countries including Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. In fact, the capacity of the export of electricity to Bangladesh has also been increased in the 2017-18 financial year.

The power plants in Bengal have been generating nearly around 7,000 MW of electricity every day on an average and private power plants around 11,000 MW. During peak hours, the state needs nearly 9,000 MW a day. Bengal ranks second after Maharashtra in terms of production of electricity without the assistance of the Centre.

The West Bengal government, in June 2015, took up a plan to revamp the state's power infrastructure at an investment of ₹ 4,000 crore over the next two years. West Bengal Power Development Corporation appointed a Mine Developer And Operator to start mining in five coal blocks.

The plans have bore fruits and work has been going on in full swing. During the 2017-18 financial year itself, a total number of 12 new





SAGARDIGHI THERMAL POWER PROJECT

Located in Murshidabad district, near the banks of River Bhagirathi, Sagardighi Thermal Power project is 250 Km away from Kolkata. The nearest railway station is Manigram on the Azimgunj- Farakka line of Eastern Railway. In the first phase, two Units of 300MW each were commissioned during 2007- 2009. In the second phase, Unit 3 & 4 with capacity of 500 MW each , with Commercial Operation Date (COD) has been declared on July 1, 2016 and December 20, 2016, respectively. The Coal Handling plant job has been completed. Further addition of another 660MW supercritical Unit installation is under progress. The Unit is likely to be commissioned by June 2022.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN LAST 7 YEARS

- **Highest PLF 78.09% IN 2014-2015(Gross generation 4104.29MU)**
- **Highest availability 77.50% in 2014-2015.**
- **Forced outage 3.52% in 2014-2015.**

33/11 KV sub-stations have been commissioned and 32 new 33/11 KV sub-stations are at various stages of completion. A total of 101.9 MVA capacity has been added so far in this financial year.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the fourth unit of the Sagardighi Thermal Power project from a public meeting at Domkal, Murshidabad on April 12, 2017. An 800 KV sub-station in Hooghly was also inaugurated on July 3, 2017.

An action plan for mitigation of low voltage in certain pockets of the state has also been prepared. This involves setting up of around 125 new 33/11 KV sub-stations, capacity upgradation of 182 existing 33/11 KV sub-stations and installation of around 26,000 new DTRs across the state. Besides, a number of other initiatives like intensification of maintenance work of lines, conversion of single phase to three phase lines, phase balancing of distribution transformers, introduction of capacitor banks etc have also been taken up. Work on the action plan has started since last financial year and will be completed in three years. The state distribution utility has been successfully ensuring 24×7 power supply across the state. The average hour of supply has been 23.57 hours in the 2016-17 financial year across the state. An amount of ₹ 300 crore is proposed to be utilised in the 2017-18 financial year for bifurcation of over-loaded feeders, reorientation of lengthy feeders and augmentation of conductor size and installation of capacitors for reduction in loss and improving the quality of power under the scheme named Strengthening and Extending of Electricity Distribution Network (SEEDN) Phase-II. Conversion of old 6.6 KV and 6 KV systems to 11 KV and use of LTAB cables in the theft-prone and congested areas so as to reduce the quantum and possibility of theft of energy, interruptions and accidents have been taken up in the said programme. GIS mapping of the installations has been undertaken for efficient utilisation and management of the existing infrastructure.

Role of WBPDCL

Highest Daily Generation: 84.714 MU AT 91.44% PLF on February 28, 2012.

Highest Monthly Generation: 2420.846 MU at 84.296% PLF in March 2012.

Highest yearly Generation: 23853.38 MU in 2014-2015.

Highest peak Generation ever: 4085MW on September 27, 2017.

Highest Monthly WBPDCL Availability percentage: 85.64% in April 2016.

Highest yearly Sent out: 21382.13 MU in 2014-2015.

Ex Bus Availability in a day: 80.809 MU on October 7, 2016

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Sales: ₹ 8700 crore turnovers with growth of 20% since 2013 -2014.

STEADY PROFITABILITY

A consistent profit earning entity.

Growth in operating profit from ₹ 1206 crore in 2012-2013 to ₹ 1448 crore in 2016-2017, representing 20% rise since 2012-2013.

INVESTMENT IN CAPACITY ADDITION

Increase of share capital from ₹ 4113 crore in 2012-2013 to ₹ 6199 crore in 2016-2017, representing 51% rise in investment indicating growth in power sector of West Bengal.

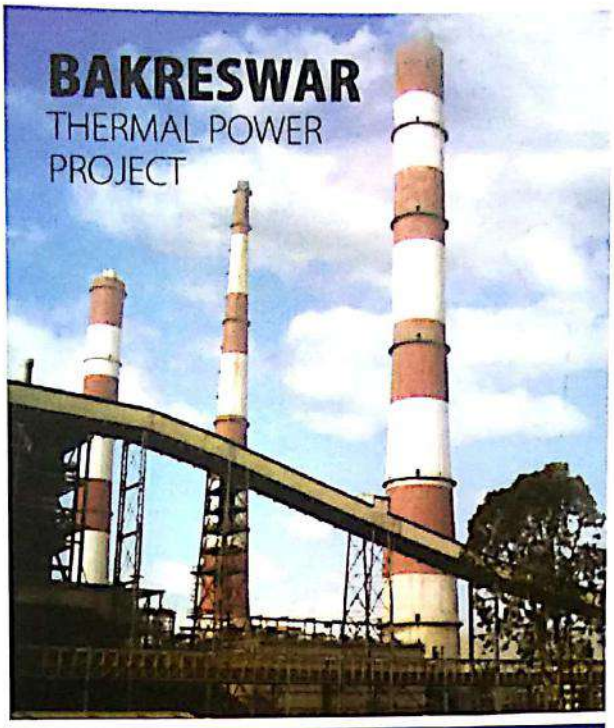
RATIOS

WBPDCL is maintaining current ratio ranging from 2.22 to 2.69 since 2012-2013 which indicates the its ability to pay short-term and long-term obligations.

Debt Service Coverage Radio (DSCR) maintained by WBPDCL is laudable which ranged from 1.50 to 1.62 since 2012-2013 to 2016-2017.

Role of WBSEDCL

- 24X7 power supply to all the consumers with average power supply 24 hrs for Urban area and more than 23 hrs for Rural area have been achieved.
- A record number of 95.46 lakh new consumers were added reaching consumer base as 181.90 Lakh.
- 51 new Customer Care Centre, 18 Division and 3 Region have been created for providing better service to consumer.
- 166 new 33/11 KV Sub-stations having capacity 4440 MVA have been commissioned.
- 4,478 Ckm new 33 KV line, 82,277 Ckm new 11 KV line and 2,43,389 Ckm new LT line commissioned.
- 1,25,982 new Distribution Transformer installed raising the Distribution Transformation capacity by 5416 MVA.
- 30,544 new Industrial Connection has been provided having contract capacity of 1077 MVA.
- 9,23,075 new Commercial Connection has been provided having contract capacity of 1648 MVA
- 1,72,878 new Agricultural Connection has been provided.
- State-of-the-Art Data Centre and Disaster Recovery Centre of WBSEDCL (first of its kind in India) made operational.
- To reduce huge time delay for locating the fault point of HT lines, order has been placed for installation of FPI in twenty 33 KV and fifty 11 KV feeders having high interruption.
- Total generation during this period is 10425.42 MU including 7050.02 MU by Purulia Pumped Storage Project (PPSP)
- The first Canal Bank Solar PV project of the country of capacity 10 MW at Haptiagachh, Uttar Dinajpur has been commissioned on August 18, 2016. Generation up to March 31, 2018 is 21.91 MU.



BAKRESWAR THERMAL POWER PROJECT

Located in Birbhum district, Bakreswar Thermal power project is 220km away from Kolkata. Nearest railway station is Chinpai on the Andal-Sainthia line of Eastern Railway. In the first phase 3x210 MW Units were commissioned during 1999-2001. In the Second phase 2x210 MW Units were commissioned during 2007-2010. Expansion of another 660MW Unit has been envisaged for implementation in the 14th Five year plan period. Detailed project Report (DPR) has already been prepared. Preparation for Environmental clearance is under progress.

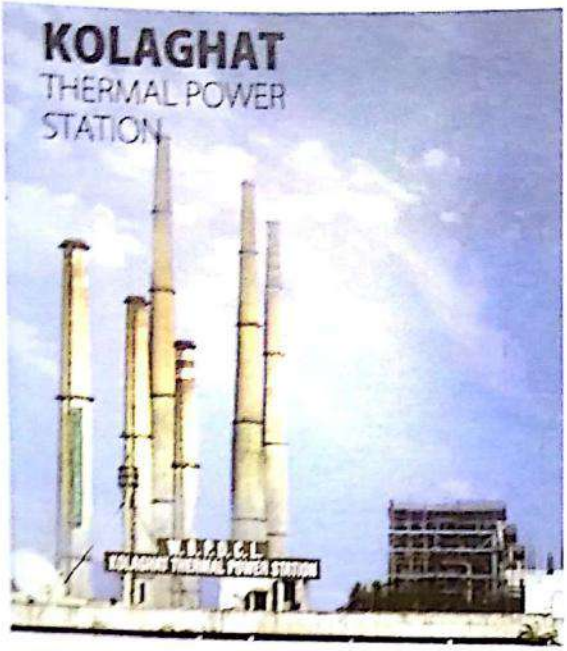
BEST PERFOMANCE IN LAST 7 YEARS

- **Best PLF achieved 87.10% in 2014-2015.**
- **APC achieved 9.5% in 2011-2012.**
- **Ex bus availability 91.09% in 2012-2013.**
- **SOC- 0.759mi/Kwh in 2016-2017(lower than WBERC norms).**
- **Highest daily generation 25.768 MU on 5th January, 2012 at 102.25% PLF.**

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Zero BTL at unit 2in 2016-2017 (last OH to OH 2015-2016 & 2016-2017)**
- **Best generation in a day 25.25MU ON 18th March, 2017**
- **Highest monthly availability 90.62% March 2017.**
- **Total forced outage 22in 2016-17 compared to 46 in previous financial (2015-2016).**

- Cumulative capacity of 2.4 MWp, each plant size of 10 KWp in 240 government and government-aided schools in different districts of the state has been installed & commissioned.
- Installation of 2 Solar PV, 10 MW each at Mejia



KOLAGHAT THERMAL POWER STATION

Situated on the banks of river Rupnarayan in Purba Mednipur district, nearest railway station is Mecheda on South Eastern Railway, Kolaghat Thermal Power Station has clear access through Haldia Road (NH-116) from NH-6 at Kolaghat. In its first phase, three Units were commissioned between 1984 and 1990. In the next phase, another three Units were commissioned between 1991 and 1993, with six units, all operational, the total installed capacity of the station stands at 1260 MW. Renovation and Modernization of (Stage -1) Units 1, 2 & 3 is under progress.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN LAST 7 YEARS

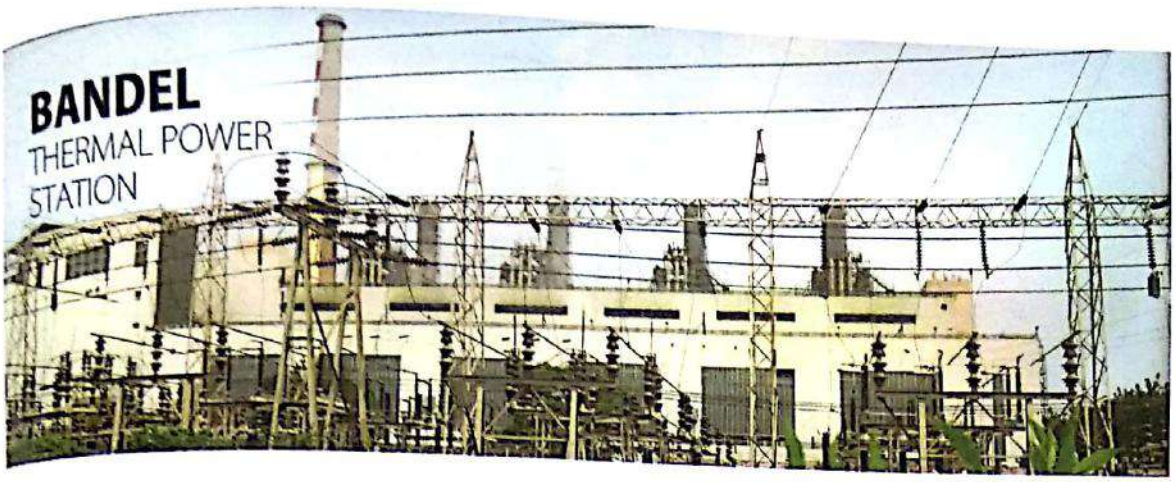
- **Best PLF achieved 68.31% in 2011-2012.**
- **APC achieved 10.2% in 2011-2012.**
- **Ex bus availability 72.53% in 2012-2013.**
- **SOC -1.09 ml/Kwh in 2014-2015(lower than WBERC norms 2 ml/ kwh) in 2014-2015.**

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Highest generation in a day 23.14MU ON 27th April, 2016.**
- **No BTL in Unit 1 and 2 during last two financial yeas 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.**
- **Reduction in number of forced outages from 75 (2015-2016) to 54 (2016-2017).**

in Bankura and Charra in Purulia District has been completed in December 2017 and January 2018 respectively. Total Generation up to March 31, 2018 is 3.44 MU.

- Work is in progress for installation of Solar PV project 10 MW each at Santaldih Purulia district and Patni & Salboni in Paschim Medinipur district.
- For installation of 10.5 MW Rooftop Solar PV Plant (Min. 10 kWp each) Project under Alo Shree Programme, LOA placed on March 19, 2018.
- Work is in progress for construction of Solar Dome at Eco Park, New Town.
- SCADA/DMS project for real time monitoring and control of substation breakers etc. made operational at Siliguri & Asansol(U/A).
- Forest clearance in principle received for Stage-I IRO-proposed 1000 MW Turga Pumped Storage Projects at Purulia.
- Conversion of overhead system to underground cabling system in Nabadwip Town completed in September 2016 and for Bolpur Phase-I completed.
- Upgradation & Strengthening of Sub-Transmission & Distribution System IRO 67 Towns completed.
- For implementation of HVDS with less LT system, Order placed for Bardhaman (Purba and Paschim) and Birbhum districts for reduction of technical loss, better availability of power under Special Infrastructure Project.
- For conversion of Over Head system to Underground system, Order placed for Coochbehar Town under Green City Mission and Tender floated for Krishnanagar & Chinsurah Towns under Special infrastructure project.
- For system improvement work of LT & HT network in different Towns under IPDS, construction of seven 33/11KV substation, capacity augmentation of 55 existing 33/11 KV substation with capacity addition of 219.65 MVA, replacement of 2.37 Lakh defective meters and installation of new 534 Distribution transformer with capacity addition of 19.76 MVA completed up to March 2018. Further three 33/11 KV Substations have been commissioned during April-May 2018.
- For HT Feeder separation for Agriculture & non-Agriculture consumers, Rural electricity infrastructure development & system improvement work under DDUGJY scheme, construction of 16 33/11KV substation, capacity augmentation of 65 existing 33/11 KV substation with capacity addition of 276 MVA, replacement of 7.49 Lakh defective meters, installation of 421 new and augmentation of 216 existing Distribution transformer completed. Further three 33/11 KV Substation have been commissioned during April-May 2018.
- For further strengthening of the distribution system/network for providing quality power supply to the existing and forthcoming consumers, a project namely SEEDN funded by



GoWB has been taken up (estimated cost ₹ 11374 crore). Construction of 10 33/11 KV substation, drawal of new 433 Ckm 33 KV line & 489 Ckm 11 KV line, conversion of 315 Ckm LT & 82 Ckm HT bare conductor to AB Cable, installation of 1643 new DTR have been completed.

- Reverse auction for power purchase has been done for the first time in India by WBSEDCL. The West Bengal Model has been adopted by MoP to Promote the RA method and national e-bidding platform has been built by MSTC.
- Uninterrupted power supply was provided to CESC area (Kolkata) at the time of crisis and also serve as a saviour to the neighbour distribution licensees such as CESC, DPL & IPCL in the event of their contingency for the greater interest of state consumers.
- Uninterrupted Export of power to Bangladesh since Dec 2013.
- 100% electrification have been completed for all Districts except Coochbehar, South 24 Parganas and Darjeeling.
- Grid power reached through different river crossing in geographically difficult area at 16 islands in Sundarban in 2012, in place of electricity from DG set etc. This has caused significant improvement in the lifestyle of the inhabitants and development of those areas.
- All Households in Sagar Island have already been electrified.
- Electrification of 33 Enclave in Coochbehar District have been completed and energized as on January 31, 2018
- 61,655 village intensification done under different RE Schemes with around 26.09 Lakh BPL connections.
- Total Electrification of Household coverage has increased from 55% (2011) to 99.81(March 2018)
- Upgraded spot billing introduced in all CCCs covering 1.82 crore consumers, in October 2016 using Android based smart phone as the Billing device. During meter reading, longitude and latitude is being captured along with photo of meter for better service and correct billing.
- Implementation of "VIDYUT SAHAYOGI" mobile Apps w.e.f June 03, 2016, facilitate consumers for instant application for new connection with connection status, viewing of bill & payment, application of load enhancement and lodging of complaints with unique docket number.

BANDEL THERMAL POWER STATION

Bandel Thermal power station is located on the banks of River Hooghly in Hooghly district. The nearest railway station is Tribeni on the Bandel – Katwa – Azimgungj line of Eastern Railway. The power Station has good access with Assam Road, Grand Trunk Road as well as with Kalyani Expressway. In its first phase, four Units of 80MW each were commissioned in the year 1965-1966. After 40 years of relentless service, these Units were rerated to 60 MW each. The fifth unit of Bandel Thermal Power Station (original capacity of 210MW), is the fifth one in the Country and first in Eastern India , was installed in 1982. The Renovation and Modernization of 210MW unit under the assistance of World Bank has been successfully completed. Capacity of the fifth Unit has been improved from 210MW to 215MW. Presently the total capacity of the Station stands at 455MW with four derated small Units and 215 MW capacity fifth Unit. Unit 3 and 4 BTPS will be decommissioned shortly and R & M will be done for Unit 1 and 2.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN LAST 7 YEARS

- **APC achieved 11.5% in 2012-2013.**
- **Ex bus availability 53.30% in 2012-2013.**
- **Forced outage 48 on 2012-2013.**

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **PLF achieved 47.29% in 2016-2017**
- **Ex bus availability 59.23% in 2016-2017.**
- **Unit 2 achieved 101.3% PLF on 22nd March, 2017.**
- **Unit 5 102% Ex bus availability in December 2016.**

SANTALDIH THERMAL POWER STATION

Located on the banks of River Damodar, Santaldih Thermal Power station is situated in the Purulia district. The nearest railway station is Santaldih which is on the Adra-Gomoh section of South Eastern Railway. After decommissioning of Unit 1, 2, 3 and 4 and after commissioning of two Units i.e. Unit 5 and 6 of 250MW (each), the present capacity of the station is 500MW. Further addition of another two 660MW SUPERCRITIAL Units (Unit 7 & 8) is envisaged in the 14th Five year plan period.

BEST PERFORMANCE IN LAST 7 YEARS

- **Highest Generation 3702 MU & PLF 84.29% in 2015-2016.**
- **Highest daily generation 12.26MU On 5th February, 2012a at PLF 102.17%**

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **PLF ACHIEVED 83.73% IN 2016-2017**
- **Ex bus availity 91.95% in 2016-2017.**
- **APC best among WBPDCL power stations 8.27% in 2016-2017.**
- **SOC achieved 0.26ml/ kwh in 2016-2017.**
- **Achieved more than 100% PLF continuously for 29 days (14.2.17-9.3.17).**
- **Lowest forced outage 1.9%.**

- SMS based Network Health Monitoring System has also been introduced for early restoration of faulty system
- SMS alerts/notifications are being sent to the existing/intending consumers (having mobile no. registered with WBSEDCL) for i)Quotation amount for new connection/load enhancement ii) meter reading Schedule iii) Generation of energy bills iv) Payment receipt intimation v) Planned shutdown vi) Safety information and consumer awareness
- Bill Payment Options: There are multiple options of bill payment in WBSEDCL.

e-Payment through Web Portal & Mobile App: Using Debit/ Credit Card, Internet enabled Bank Account (72 Banks), Stored value Wallet (9)

e-Payment through Mobile Wallet: Airtel Money, Vodafone m-Pesa, Paytm, Cash counter of 509 CCCs

Collection through e-Pradhan system of Govt of WB: Integration has been made with e-Pradan of IFMS (integrated Financial Management System) of West Bengal government for payment against energy bill/quotation of government establishment using RTGS.

Collection Kiosk: 250 collection Kiosks installed at different CCCs- Payment hour: 8 am to 10 pm (All Days)

Online Collection Centre by Third party: Online Cash Collection Centre maintained by third party Agency M/s Sahaj e-Village Limited- 4110 such collection centres

ECS: Consumer can opt for ECS payment through submitting mandate form endorsed by concerned Banker

RTGS/NEFT: All types of customers of WBSEDCL (Bulk and L&MV) under any category can pay their Energy Bills through RGTS/NEFT.

NACH: To facilitate payment using NACH facility for the L&MV consumers of WBSEDCL, necessary provision of registration has been implemented through web-portal of WBSEDCL.

Electronic Bill Presentment and Payment (EBPP): L&MV Consumers can get himself registered for Electronic Bill Presentment and Payment (EBPP) directly through Bank's portal. After registration, billing information at bank's portal can be viewed by consumers as an when the bill is generated. This facility is available for the customers of HDFC bank only.

Pre-paid consumers can register at the web-portal of WBSEDCL using Pre-paid meter number. After registration, consumers can be able to pay online through net-banking/debit-credit card/ wallet for necessary pre-paid voucher generation.

Accolades

- Proud winner of "Power India Excellence



Major achievements from May 2011 to April 2018
(Hydel Generation Wing)

A. Purulia Pumped Storage Project (PPSP)

Sl. No.	Name of the Project (Capacity)	Period: May 2011 to April 2018
1	Purulia Pumped Storage Project (PPSP) : (900MW)	• Generation : 2011-12 : 766.413 MU 2012-13 : 797.4954 MU 2013-14 : 784.7046 MU 2014-15 : 1416.0618 MU 2015-16 : 1055.001 MU 2016-17 : 1106.9784MU 2017-18 : 1013.77 MU 2018-19 (upto April 2018) : 60.7608 MU

B. Hydel Head Quarter:

- **Running Hydel Power Stations**

Sl. No.	Name of the Project (Capacity)	Period: May 2011 to April 2018
1	• Rammam Stage II (51 MW) • Teesta Canal Fall (PS-I, PS-II & PS-III) (67.5 MW) • Jaldhaka HEP (Stage-I & Stage-II) (44 MW) • Small HEPs (total Capacity 8.6 MW)	• Generation : 2011-12 : 421.622 MU 2012-13 : 462.564 MU 2013-14 : 543.384 MU 2014-15 : 506.317 MU 2015-16 : 525.753 MU 2016-17 : 520.204 MU 2017-18 : 414.31 MU* *Generation affected due to unrest in Darjeeling Hill(up to April 2018) : 37.49 MU • Milestone achieved: - Lodhama Inter Connection Scheme (LICS) at RHP Stage-II completed for augmentation of generation. - Renovation & Modernisation of 3 (three) 9 MW units of JHP Stage-I completed. - Augmentation of JHP Stage-I completed by installing one new unit of 9 MW capacity Automatic Trash Rack Cleaning Machine (TRCM) installed at TCF PS-I for improvement in Generation - Transformer capacity augmented from 2x7.5 MVA to 2x20 MVA at TCF PS-I 1x7.5 MVA to 1x20 MVA at TCF PS-II 1x20 MVA to 1x31.5 MVA at TCF PS-III 1x20 MVA to 1x50 MVA at TCF PS-III - 1st & 2nd units at JHP Stage-II refurbished - 10 MW Teesta Canal Bank Solar PV Project, the first in West Bengal and the largest Canal Bank project in India, commissioned on 18.08.2016 at Haptiagach, Dist. Uttar Dinajpur. - All-time record generation (179.55 MU) achieved by JHP Stage-I, in its 50 years of glorious journey, in 2016-17 - Commissioning of 132/33/11 KV Sub-station at RHP St.-II for system improvement, providing construction power to Rammam, St.-III (project by NTPC Ltd.) and for evacuation of power of the upcoming HEPs in the region.

C. PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT DEPARTMENT (PSPD)

Sl. No.	Name of the Project (Capacity)	Period: May 2011 to April 2018 Milestone achieved:
1	Turga Pumped Storage Project (1000 MW) Project Cost: Rs.4800.69 Crore (Loan assistance from JICA) (EAP loan 85%: Equity/ State Share 15%)	• DPR stage Detailed Survey and Investigation completed. • DPR prepared and concurred by CEA on October 2016 • WB State Planning Board accorded In-Principle approval in January 2016 • Pre-construction stage investigation taken up • Design & Engineering taken up by Local Consultant • EAC, MoEF & CC, GoI has recommended the Environmental Clearance of the project subject to Stage -I Forest Clearance • Total Compensatory afforestation land of 578 Acres (234 Ha) arranged by Govt. of West Bengal in February 2017. • Cabinet Approval obtained on 8th May 2017 by Govt. of WB on the updated cost Rs.4800.69 Crore. • Debt sustainability Certificate obtained from Govt. of WB for EAP loan. • The Project has been included in the Rolling Plan of JICA for external funding by DEA, MoF, GoI. • Contact Mission of JICA conducted on 28th July 2017. Supplementary survey of JICA is in progress since October 2017. Fact Finding Mission of JICA Conducted in February 2018. • Diversion arrangement of existing Irrigation and Drinking Water system concurred by I&W Department and PHE Directorate respectively. • Stage-I Forest Clearance obtained on 12.04.2018 from MoEF & CC (Forest), GoI. • MoEF &CC has been requested for consideration of EC.

D. PLANNING, INVESTIGATION & DESIGN DEPARTMENT (PIDD)

Sl. No.	Name of the Project (Capacity)	Period: May 2011 to April 2018 Milestone achieved:
A.	Projects under Implementation	
1.	Bandu Pumped Storage Project (900MW) Project Cost: ₹ 4464.16 crore (including IDC)	Initial PFR prepared by WBSEDCL. Hydro-meteorological data collection is going on Topographical Survey (1:5000) of Project area completed. Preliminary Geotechnical Investigations by GSI completed. For development of Bandu PSP through Case II Bidding Mechanism, the PFR updated on April 25, 2018. Engagement of Consultant for selection of best suited Commercial Model for development of Bandu PSP through Case II Bidding Route, preparation of RfQ and RfP document for Case II Bidding is being processed. Bid Request to short listed four Consultancy Firms uploaded. Technical bid opened.
2.	Lodhama- II SHEP 10 MW Project Cost: ₹ 55.86 crore (including IDC with Grant)	Acquisition of Land for project implementation is in process. Detail Design & Engineering in progress
3.	Rammam Intermediate Stage HEP 12MW Project Cost: ₹ 99.20 crore (including IDC with Grant)	Consent to establish (NOC) from West Bengal Pollution Control Board obtained. West Bengal side - Land Valuation completed & Consent of Pvt. Land owners received. Long term settlement for Govt. land obtained from Land Department. Sikkim side – Permission for direct purchase of land and NOC from owner obtained. Work of construction of Approach Road started in April, 2018.

Certificate" for Customer Satisfaction and Quality Service from India-Tech Foundation, Mumbai in 2011 & 2012

- "Award of Excellence" by ICC (six consecutive years) from 2011 to 2016.
- "Skoch Digital Inclusion Award, 2012" for Reforms & R-APDRP.
- 2nd best Award for "Customer Service & Sound Financial Base" by the rating of Ministry of Power, GOI, in 2013.
- "Best Innovation" winner in IPPAI Power Awards in 2014.
- "REPA State Awards 2015" for best State of India in Rural & Remote Area Electricity Access.
- "Best Hydro Power Generation" for Rammam Hydel Project in 16th Regulators and Policy Makers Retreat 2015 organised by IPPAI.
- "SKOCH Order-of-Merit" among top-100 projects in India for "VIDYUT SAHAYOGI" for the year 2016.
- IPPAI power awards for 'Outstanding Innovation (2015-16)' for customer service, power purchase cost at the 17th Regulators & Policymakers Retreat 2016.
- SAP ACE AWARD [SAP INDIA] for 'Successful Implementation of ERP'.
- 'Heritage' Award for Sidrapong Hydel Project.
- 'PLATINUM STATE AWARD WINNER' in the category of Top Investment & Infra Excellent State in Sustainable Energy & Power at 10th Enertia Awards 2016.
- IPPAI Power Awards in October 2017 for Utility achieving electrification of unelectrified household.
- ICC Award in November 2017 for Best State Power utility Award.
- 11th Enertia Awards in November 2017 for Platinum State Award: 'Top Investment Friendly & Infra Excellent State in Sustainable Energy & Power'

Major Achievements in Rural Electrification

- 100 % electrification has been completed for all Districts except Coochbehar (99.2%), South 24 Parganas (97.56%) and Darjeeling (96.67%).
- Electrification of 33 Enclaves in Coochbehar have been completed and energized as on January 31, 2018
- 61,655 village intensification done under different RE Schemes with around 26.09 Lakh BPL connections.
- Total Electrification of Household coverage has increased from 55% (2011) to 99.81 (March 2018)
- All Households in Sagar Island have already



been electrified.

- Grid power reached through different river crossing in geographically difficult area at 16 islands in Sundarban in 2012, in place of electricity from DG set etc. This has caused significant improvement in the lifestyle of the inhabitants and development of those areas.
- All 98 villages in Sundarban Islands have been electrified; and, so far, 38,000 households have been provided with electricity. Work of service connection to remaining households is in progress and is expected to be completed by December 2018.

Expenditure incurred for various schemes
RGGVY XI Plan: ₹ 1909.87 crore
RGGVY XII Plan: ₹ 525.62 crore
DDUGJY Scheme: ₹ 2.00 crore
WBREP Scheme: ₹ 922.36 crore
WBREP (Universal) Scheme: ₹ 148.69 crore
BRGF Scheme: ₹ 2106.42 crore

Sustainable, Environmental Friendly Initiative

Environmental friendly Hydro-Electric Projects are proposed in the hilly region of Darjeeling District and a second pumped storage project of 1000 MW capacity at Turga at a total outlay of ₹ 4800.69 crore in the district of Purulia to meet peak power requirements and increase the renewable mix.

With a view to ensure safe, reliable, cost-effective electricity production by life extension of old units, performance improvements and for addressing pollution issues, an amount of ₹ 335 crore has been earmarked for expenditure on Electrostatic Precipitator (ESP) & Ash Handling Plant (AHP) along with the upgradation, renovation and modernization of Boiler-Turbine Generator (BTG) of Kolaghat Units 1,2,3 of WBPDCL.

In the current financial year (2017-18), till October 2017, New Chanditala 400 KV Substation at District Hooghly with 630 MVA transformation

capacity, New PPSP 400 KV GIS at District Purulia with 80 MVAR Reactor and Sadaipur 220/132/33 kV Substation at Birbhum with 420 MVA transformation capacity came into operation. Consumers of the entire state, especially in Howrah, Hooghly and Birbhum districts, will be benefited from these Substations. Total 1771 MVA Transformation Capacity including augmentation and 389 CKM Transmission Line has been added during this period.

Reactive Power Management

For Reactive Power Management in the State Transmission System, installation of total 590 MVAR of 33 kV Capacitor Bank at 36 EHV Substations of WBSETCL has been planned to improve the power factor as well as system voltage profile and to reduce transmission loss in WBSETCL system.

In order to control and overcome high voltage problems in ER grid, installation of a 125 MVAR switchable bus reactor at Arambag 400 KV substation has been considered.

Solar PV power projects

Two Ground Mounted Solar Photo Voltaic Projects (SPV) of cumulative installed capacity of 20 MW at Mejia in Bankura and Charrah in Purulia have been commissioned in December 2017 while a 10 MW SPV Project at Santaldih in Purulia is expected to be commissioned by June 2018. Till October 2017, the cumulative generation from the commissioned SPV Projects at Teesta Canal Bank at Uttar Dinajpur is about 16.42 MU. Eight Ground Mounted SPV Projects of cumulative installed capacity of 71 MW at an aggregated outlay of ₹ 371 crore have been proposed in the current financial year in Purulia, Paschim Midnapore, Jhargram, Nadia, Uttar Dinajpur, Darjeeling and Paschim Bardhaman districts under RIDF Tranch XXIII. The department has taken a major initiative to install Grid Connected Roof Top Solar PV Power Plant (GRTSPV) under Aloshree Programme and proposed to install 21.4 MW GRTSPV in the roofs of the buildings of WBSEDCL and all the power plants of WBPDCL at a total cost of ₹ 150 crore. In addition, installation of 10 KWP Plants in different schools/colleges/educational institutes have also been taken up. Till October 2017, such plants have been installed in 207 educational institutions. As a pilot project, the department has decided to set up three solar trees @ 3 KWP in Bidyut Unnayan Bhavan and released ₹ 12 lakh for this purpose.

Besides, the Power department has installed solar panels in 1,000 schools, 21 colleges and five universities across the state. After the first batch of 1,000 schools, another 1,000 schools will be identified for setting up the panels in the next financial year.

Work has also started on the setting up of floating solar panels in large water bodies within the premises of thermal power generating stations. They will come up in Sagardighi, Santaldih and Bakreswar.

At the same time, a survey is going on in Sagar Island to develop a wind power generation plant.

The Power department is also exploring the possibility of using floating power technology, which can be made operational through gas. This plant can be set up on board a ship, in a pattern similar to the one by which a thermal power plant is set up on a field. A leading Norwegian company, Floating Power Solution, which has developed this new technology, met the Power Minister and other senior officials of the Power department in Februrary 2018. The Power department has asked the company to submit a proposal in this regard. If economically profitable, the state government would go for the adoption of this technology.

The state government has also started a project of supplying power for irrigation through a dedicated line. There is a huge consumption of power all through the year for draining water for supplying it to crops, which goes up during paddy cultivation.

The state government has started the construction of a batch of small hydroelectric power stations in the Hills region. The one at Ragnu in Darjeeling district, worth 6 megawatt (MW) has already been approved and work is in progress. Surveys are going on for setting up others in Rimbik, Nagrakata, Mirik and other places. Hydroelectric power stations are much less pollution, hence the decision for setting up these in an ecologically sensitive region like the Darjeeling district has been taken. Currently, 1076 MW of electricity is produced in Bengal using the hydroelectric method.

Ease of Doing Business Felicitation

As part of Ease of Doing Business, applications for service connections are being received and disposed online by distribution utilities. Almost all 28 services of the Directorate of Electricity is being made available online under e-District Mission Mode Programme.

Transport

Taking the state on a joy ride

Mention the word transport, and the first thing that crosses the mind of a common citizen of West Bengal is *Safe Drive Save Life* campaign launched by the state government. Such is the power of a government initiative if taken up with all seriousness and implemented in all sincerity, just what the visionary Chief Minister of the state, Mamata Banerjee, wished when she launched the statewide campaign at a function held at Nazrul Manche on July 8, 2016.

The campaign, materialised by the state Transport Department, along with the Kolkata Police, with the help of other departments of the state government and agencies, aims at—as its very name suggests—curbing road accidents and ensuring better traffic management.

Spreading mass awareness against reckless driving that has been causing road accidents was the main idea behind taking up such a campaign. It is also aimed at making the pedestrians aware of road safety.

Launching the campaign amid much enthusiasm and fanfare, the Chief Minister said, "Safe driving is an essential component of road safety. Everyday, so many lives are lost due to irresponsible driving and insensible road behaviour. Life is precious. Every life lost is sad and tragic. Not everyone violates discipline, but the price of one's wrong actions is often paid by many of the uninvolved. These days, there are many incidents of riding motorbikes without helmets. Bike races at night on flyovers often lead to fatal accidents. Lawlessness on the road will not be tolerated. Like in Kolkata, we have to ensure road safety in the districts and on national highways too. Overloading of vehicles and rough driving will not be allowed. We must sensitize the people regarding road safety through this *Safe Drive Save Life* initiative. The local clubs, folk artistes and young people must spread the message of the *Safe Drive Save Life* campaign. We must popularize this campaign on Twitter,





Facebook and other social media. We will also request the Durga Puja committees to promote the *Safe Drive Save Life* initiative. *Safe Drive Save Life* is a movement and the government will do everything possible to make our roads safer. After one year, we will reward the blocks with the least number of accidents and penalise those with the most accidents." She also stressed on the need of installing more CCTVs in different places to monitor road safety.

Ever since the launch, the campaign is now continually taking place all over the state, including Kolkata, under the aegis of Kolkata Police and West Bengal Police along with the state Transport department. Several banners and posters carrying the *Safe Drive Save Life* message have been put up in almost all the places where people usually drive past and throng for various purposes.

As part of the main campaign, *No Helmet No Petrol* was introduced across the state to check the errant two-wheeler riders. Today, as a direct fallout of the campaign, sights of people riding two-wheelers sans helmets have become a rarity.

In order to gear up the pace of the *Safe Drive Save Life* campaign, the state Youth Services department joined hands with the Transport department and the police forces and organised an awareness rally on the 17th of August 2016. The programme was observed in all the 341 blocks, 117 municipalities, six municipal corporations, 144 wards of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, 19 district headquarters and the GTA area to enhance awareness about the traffic rules. The students, youth, teachers, professors, artists, sportspersons, professionals, intellectuals, the MPs and the MLAs and the elected representatives of the local bodies, the administrative officers and common people took part in the rally in large numbers.

Fund to the tune of around ₹ 67.66 crore



has been allotted in 2017-18 to different Police Authorities for procurement of traffic and road safety equipment and CCTV cameras. Besides, extensive campaigning has also been made to create awareness among the citizens. In last three years around ₹ 143 crore has been sanctioned in this respect.

The state Transport department, on September 2 that year, also introduced a vehicle tracking and automated fare collection system to improve transparency. The vehicle tracking system will help in monitoring movement of a bus from the Command and Control Centre set up in the office building of the Calcutta State Transport Corporation.

The introduction of the automated fare collection system at all the eleven depots helps in real time monitoring of revenue collection.

But one must mention here that this was monitoring of revenue collection drive was no sporadic move of the Transport department.

Ever since the inception of the new regime in May 2011, and especially after returning to power for the second time in 2016, the state Transport department had started taking several steps to minimise loss of all the transport corporations under its fold.

The first step of them was the amalgamation of Calcutta Tramways Corporation (CTC) and Calcutta State Transport Corporation (CSTC) and West Bengal Surface Transport Corporation (WBSTC) to form West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC). At present, there are two more corporations besides WBTC and they are North Bengal State Transport Corporation



(NBSTC) and South Bengal State Transport Corporation (SBSTC).

The amalgamation of the three Corporations had ensured effective use of the infrastructure and manpower. At the same time, real-time location tracking of buses and introduction of smart cards had helped in improving the service as well as revenue generation for the Corporations. After all those years of loss in the previous era, CSTC has finally turned around and is now booking profit of about ₹ one crore per month since June 2016.

Bus rides in the state capital have also become lot safer. Although full-proof security cannot be guaranteed by any administrative measure at any level anywhere in the world, with



the installation of the CCTV cameras in the city buses and bringing the public vehicles under GPS monitoring, the commuters can indeed now sit back and relax, literally.

Nearly 900 buses in Kolkata are now fitted with close-circuit TV cameras for the safety of women passengers. The new buses that have joined the fleet of state-owned Calcutta State Transport Corporation (CSTC) under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) scheme have CCTV cameras fitted in the front, middle and outside rear parts. The surveillance is being done essentially to prevent crime against women passengers. After the 2013 Delhi gang rape in a bus, the Supreme Court had asked the Delhi government to provide security on buses after 10 pm. Other crimes like pickpocketing could also be reduced with the help of such surveillance. If any passenger lodges a complaint with police, the CCTV footage would provide vital information. The images captured by those cameras will initially be stored for three days, after which those will be erased automatically. To allow the police to use the CCTV footage, a person will have to lodge a complaint within three days.

The CSTC now operates 1,000 buses, out of which 590 are the new AC and non-AC buses with CCTV surveillance. The rest of the buses bought under the JNNURM scheme, which are undergoing trials now, would also have similar surveillance, it is learnt.

Incidentally, a project to set up IT-based communication and surveillance system is being worked upon. It would become operational in six months' time. Under the new system, the footage of the cameras will be stored in a control room set up at CSTC headquarters. Then the storage capacity will increase. The state transport department has given the contract to firms based in Mumbai and Delhi for installing and maintaining the GPS technology that should help in real-time tracking of buses.

There will also be voice communication with drivers. If there is a major traffic congestion ahead, the driver can be asked to change the route. As many as 40 LED boards will be installed at various bus termini and stoppages, which would provide information about buses.

The CSTC officials had recently written to Kolkata Police and the police commissionerates of neighbouring districts about the surveillance system. A team of officers at Kolkata Police's Detective Department inspected a couple of buses. According to the senior officers in Lalbazar, it has been decided that transport officials would start a control room where the footage collected from the CCTVs installed in the buses would be stored. In the bus, the monitor will be fitted in front of the driver's seat so that he also can keep a vigil.

The new CSTC buses will also be brought under GPS monitoring, it is learnt. CSTC is now running its buses in 29 routes. Now, for all these buses, software is being created for better turnaround time and to provide prompt and better service to the commuters. Through this GPS-based software, the CSTC officials will be able to





monitor the buses in lag time. All maintenance-related jobs, details of refueling, speed and time taken and route monitoring can be scrutinized closely with the help of this technology.

In another measure taken by the state Transport department, the CSTC has also launched smart cards for the passengers to solve their problem of paying change every time they purchase tickets.

And the last but not the least from the state transport sector for the time being, after all those years of loss in the previous era, CSTC has finally turned around and is now booking profit of about ₹ one crore per month since June 2017.

Earlier, another huge boost had come to the state transport sector as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on May 26, 2014, flagged off a fleet of 30 new AC Volvo buses in Kolkata. Later on, 800 more buses have so far been added to the existing fleet. Water and air transport have also been boosted accordingly through addition of more ferries and introducing helicopter services.

In the departmental Budget proposals for the 2018-19 financial year presented by the Transport Minister in state Assembly in February 2018, stress has been given both on developing new services across land, water as well as air, and on improving the existing services.

The budget of the department for 2018-19 stands at ₹ 1,588.81 crore, which is the highest budget for the Transport Department so far.

Three hundred new buses have already been introduced in the last financial year, and steps have been taken to introduce more, as per the Budget proposals. As many as 40 electric buses plying rechargeable batteries will be introduced in Kolkata soon, which largely addresses the issue of environment pollution as well. These are also cheaper than the fuel-run vehicles in terms of overhead cost of plying. Another 10 electric buses in the Rajarhat-New Town area and 20 in Asansol and Durgapur will be introduced too.

Meanwhile, the North Bengal State Transport Corporation (NBSTC) is introducing Premium Rocket buses with bio-toilets to ensure better connectivity at a much lesser time from different locations in north Bengal to Kolkata. With the Premium Rocket buses hitting the streets, the decade-old simple Rocket buses will gradually phase out.

In the first phase, NBSTC has introduce seven such buses. The two chassis air-conditioned buses have bio-toilets. The buses have been bought at a cost of ₹ 1.98 crore. E-ticketing system and online reservation have also been introduced.

In another major development, the state Transport department has decided not to allow any more civic bodies to operate buses. Buses will be operated only by the transport corporations.

Since March 2018, two helicopter services have been introduced. Following the direction of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, steps have been taken to develop the airport at Chharra in Purulia district. Air connectivity from Cooch Behar and Malda will also be initiated soon. All these are in addition to the services available at the Andal Airport, which the Chief Minister inaugurated on December 7, 2015.



Equal stress has been given to improve the water connectivity in the state. Twenty-seven vessels have already been introduced in the last financial year, and 86 more will be engaged soon. Moreover, steps have been taken to replace the semi-mechanised vessels with robust ones to ensure the safety of passengers.

Steps have been taken to ensure the standard operating procedure (SOP) is maintained at all the jetties. Life jackets similar to the ones used by the Coast Guard have also been introduced. Placing emphasis on safety on rivers, 23 jetties new jetties have been constructed and renovated with a total expenditure of ₹ 28.51 crore in the last financial year.

The state Transport Department has also introduced an online platform where applications for luxury car permits under the Gatidhara project from the State Transport Authority (STA) can be submitted.

The step has been taken to make the process of applying easier and hassle-free. Earlier, applicants had to stand in long queues for appointments and interviews that they needed to get through in order to obtain the permit. But with the introduction of the online application system, applicants do not need to go to the STA offices any more. Prospective permit seekers just need to log in into the website www.transport.wb.gov.in and click on the links for Annexure-I, Annexure-II and Annexure-III to download three forms, and then fill them up and submit them for an appointment on a desired date and time. After getting the date, the applicant has to appear before the officers in the STA with all the necessary documents for the interview. Applying for the permit is the first stage for getting the benefits under Gatidhara, which enables purchase of a luxury car for commercial purposes. Once the permit is obtained, the process of sanctioning a subsidy of ₹ 1 lakh to buy the car begins.

The applicant will then get an SMS on his given mobile number as soon as his or her subsidy is granted. The person will also receive another SMS when the fund is released. The



Transport department has introduced the SMS-based system recently, by which the applicant no longer needs to run to a dealer or any other official to know whether the subsidy has been released.

The STA's office in Kolkata is at Kasba, while there are two more offices in Siliguri and Durgapur. During the erstwhile regime, pre-2011, people from across all over the state had to come to the STA in Kasba for the interview and the permits. The new government has since set up the branch offices in Siliguri and Durgapur, which cater to the applicants from North Bengal and South Bengal respectively. Applicants from districts in and adjacent to Kolkata can get their permits from the Kasba office. The Gatidhara project was the brainchild of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. So far, over 13,000 unemployed youths have benefitted from it.

And last but by no means the least, the state Transport department's branding of the FIFA Under-17 World Cup held in 2017 caught everyone's eyes and became very successful. On all the buses the department had designated for ferrying the fans and players, was written *Ebar Khela Jombe Bangla*.

The department also went similar branding for two of the most popular annual events that Bengal hosts: the Gangasagar Mela and the International Kolkata Book Fair in January and February, respectively, in 2018. The branding appeared on the buses (from Esplanade, Babughat and Howrah) and the 30 vessels (16 belonging to West Bengal Transport Corporation and 14 to Hooghly River Transport Corporation) designated for the Gangasagar Mela, and on the buses (both AC and non-AC) designated specially for ferrying people to and from the Book Fair, which this time took place at the Central Park near Karunamoyee in Salt Lake.

Let's here summarize the activities of the department for a view in nutshell.

Under the able and dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the department, during the last seven years, has taken a number of major initiatives in order to provide an efficient, transparent and smart transport system for the state.

Name and brief description of major schemes:

GATIDHARA: It is a State funded subsidy scheme in transport sector for the unemployed youth enrolled with the Employment Bank. Since adoption of this scheme in 2015-16 by Transport Department, so far total number of beneficiaries covered under this scheme is 24112.

ROAD SAFETY: With the inspiration of the Chief Minster towards greater road safety, 'Safe Drive Save Life' campaign has been introduced since 2016-17. Fund to the tune of around ₹ 67.66 crore has been allotted in 2017-18 to different Police Authorities for procurement of traffic and road safety equipment and CCTV cameras. Besides, extensive campaigning has also been made to create awareness among the citizens. In last three years around ₹ 143 crore has been sanctioned in this respect.

UTILISATION OF PLAN FUND:

During the last seven years, budgetary provision has increased manifold and most of the plan fund has been released for creation of various Transport Infrastructure and to STUs. Year-wise Release of fund for last seven years is furnished in the Table below:

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Release (in ₹ cr)	167.53	123.38	354.40	384.84	433.60	457.56	704.48

Highlights of major achievements in the past Seven years:

Organizational Restructuring / Reforms:

District Level :

25 new Motor Vehicles Offices and Three Regional Transport Offices at the newly created districts, Kalimpong, Jhargram and Paschim Burdwan, have been set.

Constitution of RTAs in the three newly constituted Districts.

Trifurcation of PVD, Kolkata with two new units at Kasba and Salt Lake set up for decentralized services in Kolkata. Further decentralization with another unit at Behala has been done.

Regional Level: Two Regional Offices of State Transport Authority, one at Siliguri & other at Durgapur has started. Public Help Desk in all RTO & ARTO offices in WB have been set up for betterment of public service.

State Level: Transport Directorate has been established to bring all the Motor Vehicle Offices under one umbrella and for better monitoring of the service delivery to the people. North Bengal Zonal Office of the Directorate has also been set up.

Voluntary Retirement Scheme: 1593 employees of STUs have been covered under VRS in order to make the STUs gradually self-reliant and viable entities.

STU Merger: Operational and managerial integration among different STUs and route rationalization has been made. A common board of management for Kolkata based STUs (CSTC, CTC and WBSTC) namely West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) has been formed for better management of fleet, resources etc.

Optimal utilization and monetization of idle land assets of the State Transport Undertakings initiated: Process completed in five depots and around ₹ 229.32 crore have been mobilised.

State Road Safety Council and District Road Safety Committees constituted to ensure co-ordinated action on Road Safety across the State.

Five new check posts to prevent overloading at Palsanda in Murshidabad District, Shaktigarh in Burdwan district, Weigh Bridge Cum Checkpost at Lodhasuli, Jhargram District, Boxirhat and Barobisha in Coochbehar district have been made operational.

Various major policy interventions to regulate Auto- rickshaws and to pave the way for introduction of e-rickshaw etc.

e-Governance and Intelligent Transport System

Website of Transport Department has been introduced.

Certificate of fitness and driving test under CCTV surveillance has been started.

e-Vahan has been introduced for registration of vehicles.

Introduction of pre-paid West Bengal Transport Card in the buses run by WBTC.

Introduction of a new passenger- friendly mobile App, called PATHODISHA.

Among other intelligent transportation system, online ticket booking, Collection of fare through Electronic Ticketing Machine (ETM) have been introduced in buses.

Road Transport Services:

2195 new buses including 874 high standard AC as well as non-AC buses under extended JNNURM programme in the State sector have been rolled out in last seven years.

Around 15,303 private buses have been registered for strengthening of public transport system throughout the state during this period.

International bus route from Kolkata to Agartala via Dhaka and Kolkata to Dhaka via Khulna have been introduced.

Special Services for "Durga Puja Parikroma" has been arranged by Bus (WBTC, NBSTC & SBSTC), by Tram (WBTC) and by Vessel (WBTC).

Special transport arrangement with AC buses during FIFA U-17 World Cup in Kolkata have been made.

Fund for Construction / renovation of 262 bus termini in important locations like Digha, Bolpur, Jhargram, Garia at various District headquarters and important localities including major municipal towns has been sanctioned in this period. Funds for construction of passenger sheds have also been sanctioned.

Introduction of e-rickshaws and e-bike, the green mode of transport as "last mile connectivity" across the State has been introduced and within the regulatory framework.

Water Transport Services:

In order to ensure safety of jetty-ghats and also to the passengers, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been implemented in 460 jetty-ghats.

'Jaladhara' scheme has been launched to convert existing 'Bhubhutis" into properly designed mechanized boats.

Initiatives have been taken for construction of 200 new designed boats under 'Jaladhara' Scheme in the State sector.

Construction of 86 new wooden/ steel vessels has been taken up during this period, out of which 50 vessels has been rolled out.

In order to ensure river safety, construction/re-construction/repair of 125 Jetties have been undertaken.

Towards overall improvement of water Transportation Sector between Haldia and Farakka, an Inland Water Transportation Project has been envisaged for an amount of ₹ 3591 crore through World Bank assistance. The first phase of this Project from Haldia to Tribeni has been formulated for an amount ₹ 1021 crore and has been approved by Government of India.

Civil Aviation

Low cost-passenger–friendly helicopter connectivity between Kolkata and other destination like Malda, Balurghat, Digha and Gangasagar have been introduced.

Commercial operations of Greenfield airport in private sector at Andal-Durgapur started.

27 helipads have been completed and put to use. Steps has been taken for revival of different unserved Airports at Coochbehar, Balurghat and Malda.

Infrastructure Engineering

Construction of the Beckbagan ramp of the A.J.C Bose Road Flyover completed.

Kolkata Central Bus Terminus at Santragachi has been set up. Construction of two right turn flyovers at Santragachi with a cost involvement ₹ 40 crore has been started in order to ensure smooth movement of traffic flow for the Kolkata Central Bus Terminus at Santragachi.

Collection of motor vehicle revenue in West Bengal (Rupees in Crore.):

Major emphasis has been laid during the last seven years and as a result the collection of motor vehicle revenue which was ₹ 986 crore in 2011-12 has increased to ₹ 2284.98 crore in 2017-18.

After all these said and done, one can only conclude by saying that the state Transport department has now been leaving its imprint on public life apart from becoming a revenue-earning agency for the state government.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Andal Airport
The new landmark in state's civil aviation

December 7, 2015, became a historic day as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on that day flew off to the national capital on a direct Air India trial flight from the newly built up and country's first private greenfield airport, the Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport in Andal.

In the flight, the Chief Minister was accompanied by Lee Hock Lye, the Director of the Changi Airports International that has stake in the airport in Andal. Also on board were Kolkata Mayor Sovan Chatterjee, a team of business delegates from Kolkata as well as from the Asansol-Durgapur belt, and a few journalists.

The Chief Minister started from the Kolkata airport around 2 pm and the flight touched down at the Andal airport around 2.40 pm. The Andal-Delhi flight took off after a brief halt.

"This flight will be of much help to the people in South Bengal as well as neighbouring areas in Jharkhand," the Chief Minister said before boarding the flight. "Travelling to from Durgapur to Delhi will be hassle-free now," she added.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was on a three-day tour to New Delhi where she called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the afternoon of the 8th of December. In her meeting with the Prime Minister, she raised the demand for release of held-up central funds to Bengal and aid for the damages caused by the floods in the state in May-June this year. She flew back to Kolkata via Andal by the same flight on the 10th.

The regular passenger service of the Andal-Delhi flight, however, started a fortnight later, since the 21st of December. Air India now operates the service thrice a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday,





using a 122-seat Airbus 319 aircraft, which takes the Kolkata-Andal-Delhi and Delhi-Andal-Kolkata routes.

Air India already operates a flight between Kolkata and Andal using a 46-seat aircraft six days a week, except on Friday.

The Air India's Kolkata-Andal-Delhi flight AI 733 starts from Kolkata at 8.30 am and reaches Andal at 9 am, and then takes off from Andal at 9.30 am and lands in New Delhi at 11.45 am.

Airport at Andal, providing direct connectivity to Delhi, would benefit the near 1.1 crore population who live in the Asansol-Durgapur-Jharkhand catchment area.

The Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport at Andal, developed by the Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Limited (BAPL) over an area of 650 acres land and at a cost of over ₹ 600 crore, is India's first private greenfield airport. Its 2,800-metre runway is equipped with a CAT-I instrument landing system (ILS) and can handle narrow-body aircrafts like Airbus A 320 and Boeing 737. The airport apron has four parking bays and a helipad. The 5,750 sq-mt passenger terminal of the Andal airport has a capacity of one million passengers per annum. As of now, it has six check-in counters and two baggage conveyor belts.



On the return leg, AI 734 takes off from New Delhi at 12.35 pm and reaches Andal at 02.40 pm, and again takes off from Andal at 3.20 pm and touches down at Dumdum at 3.50 pm.

This second flight from the Kazi Nazrul Islam

The Government of West Bengal has a 1.02 per cent stake in the airport via West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation while the Changi Airports International of Singapore has 36.32 per cent stake.

Housing
To shelter all and sundry

Shelter is one of the basic human needs in human life. As Mamata Banerjee took over as the Chief Minister of Bengal in May 2011 and started her strive for development of the state, she immediately felt that housing was one of the major sectors that called for quality attention and serious endeavours. It was under her encouragement and guidance that the state Housing department started taking up several social housing schemes for different categories of people belonging to the economically weaker sections (EWS) and also particularly women of all income groups (LIG, MIG, HIG).

One of the flagship projects of the Housing department is Gitanjali. As the other housing scheme Amaar Thikana was merged with Gitanjali since the 2014-15 financial year, Gitanjali is being implemented all over the state. As per approval of the Finance department, the unit cost stands at ₹ 70000 in the plain areas ₹ 75000 in the hilly or remote areas and Sundarban. In the existing scheme, the beneficiary constructs his or her own dwelling unit, and the fund is transferred to the beneficiary's bank account, initially 70%, and thereafter 30% considering the progress of construction, through the District Magistrate concerned.

The target for construction, as per the department sources, had been fixed at 80000 dwelling units with the Budget provision of ₹ 620 crore for the 2016-17 financial year, and the target was achieved successfully like the previous two financial years. So, taken from the 2011-12 financial year, little over 280000 dwelling units have been sanctioned/constructed so far under the scheme.

Besides, 720 flats have been constructed under the EWS housing scheme in the New Town area and handed over to the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (WBHIDCO) for allotment amongst the people who had lost their land and houses for the new township.

As of now, all the municipal areas of the state are included in the existing Gitanjali housing scheme, it is learnt. Since the 2016-17 financial year, Kolkata Municipal Corporation, too, has been brought under its umbrella.

"We have fixed a target of constructing 90000 dwelling units during the upcoming 2017-18 financial year," said Sovan Chatterjee, the Housing Minister, who is also the Mayor of Kolkata, in his departmental Budget speech at the Assembly.

Gitanjali has been proved to be the "most useful scheme" in order to overcome the problem of shelter for the people in the rural and the hilly areas of the state, the Joint Secretary to the Housing department told us.





A total allocation of ₹ 920 crore has been proposed by the Housing department under the core plan outlay of the Budget for the implementation of different schemes during the 2017-18 financial year. Out of this amount, for the allocation for construction of houses for the people belonging to the economically weaker sections of the society, ₹ 801 crore has been proposed, of which ₹ 701 crore would go to the rural areas and the rest ₹ 100 crore to the urban areas. "Only the families with a monthly income of ₹ 6000 or less are eligible for these schemes," the Minister's Budget speech read.

Moving on to another important activity of the Housing department, the Rental Housing scheme, meant for accommodating the state government employees, a sum of ₹ 30 crore has been allocated for construction of new flats during the financial year 2017-18.

The number of already completed new flats constructed by the department up to February 2017 stands at 368. These flats have already been handed over to the authorities concerned for allotment, and the allotment process has been started as well. Another 244 flats are presently at different stages of construction. These apart, work has started in Alipurduar, at Nimtouri in Purba Medinipur and at Kakdwip in South 24-Parganas, too.

At present, the Housing department has to maintain nearly 34000 flats of various categories, including the Rental Housing Estates for the government employees and the Public Rental Housing Estates for the general public, throughout the state. Due to non-maintenance over a pretty long period of time, most of these flats have become dilapidated. The department has decided to take up replacement and renovation of such flats in a phased manner. It is not at all desirable that the people who are residing in these rental estates should live miserably, the government feels. The department has allotted ₹ 25 crore in this head for the 2017-18 financial year.

The department has also brought in transparency measures in allotment of the West Bengal Housing Board flats. It had been a kind of tradition in the earlier regime, the government feels, not to keep the names of applicants properly and serially, which often resulted in a proper applicant getting deprived. To remove the



scope of such anomalies, the allotment procedure of the RHEs and the PRHEs (LIG, MIG, HIG) flats has been brought under outright computerisation relinquishing the previous complicated and cumbersome process. Any applicant can now obtain information regarding his or her status details as well as the number of vacant flats available directly from the department's website www.wbhousing.gov.in just by a click of the mouse.

Similarly, in case of the PRHEs, too, computerised waiting list is going to be maintained.

As per instruction of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the erstwhile prevailing quota system has been completely abolished.

All the work of the department, the estimated cost of which is more than ₹ 5 lakh, is now being taken up through e-tendering to ensure transparency.

For over three decades or so, the buildings constructed by the department used to be of old fashion and design without any foresight of compatibility with the demands of the day. Now the multi-storeyed buildings are being constructed with a 6' (instead of 3' in the earlier days) wide exit and provision for an additional emergency exit to combat the crises arising out of any untoward incident of any sort.

Another major project of the state Housing department is constructing "secured accommodation" for the working women "at a very low rate". A sum of ₹ 12 crore has been allocated in this year's departmental Budget under the Head for construction of such Working Women's Hostels.

"Our government is concerned to provide accommodation for the working women who are less paid and single as well," Housing Minister Sovan Chatterjee said at the Assembly.

During the last six years, the department has constructed eight such hostels.

In an innovative measure, the state Housing department decided to build Night Shelters for the patient parties within the campus of different government hospitals. Under this project, carried out in consultation with the state Health & Family Welfare department, construction of three such Night Shelters has already been completed. Besides, another project for construction of a 90-seat Night Shelter at the Baruipur Sub-Division Hospital is at its final stage now.



After so long a period of Independence, no attention was given for the construction of bathrooms and toilets etc for the uses of the people, especially the women, during their journey by road, which is the minimum requirement of a civilised society. To reverse the situation, the department has taken up a scheme called Pathasathi, under which motels, bathrooms, toilets, waiting rooms, night shelters and restaurants are being set up at every 50 km of the national highways, state highways and other major roads throughout the state.

The Housing department has already constructed 18 such Pathasathis at Bolpur, Hilli, Tapan, Patiram, Matigara, Fulbari, Methapukur, Bishnubati, Old Malda, Farakka, Gaighata, Petrapole, Ashokenagar, Jhargram, Debra, Kharagpur, Narayangarh and Mecheda. Besides, fund has been provided for the state Public Works department for constructing 12 more Pathasathis at Raghunathpur, Karjona, Haringhata, Krishnanagar, Diamond Harbour, Pailan, Berhampore, Bagdogra, Chalsa, Nandakumar, Shantipur and Jamaldah.

Apart from this, the PWD, from their own budgetary allocation, has constructed 38 more Pathasathi units and handed those over to the Housing department who, in turn, has handed those over to the DMs concerned. The Pathasathi units are being operated by engaging suitable self-help groups or competent agencies by the District Magistrates following standard procedure.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had announced that the state government employees would be provided with ownership flats "without the land cost and construction cost to cost basis" under a special scheme called Akanksha and made the Housing department the nodal agency of the scheme with the target of constructing 50000 flats in five categories such as Elegant, Premium, Classic, Economy and Standard depending on the employees' Grade Pay per mensem. The only condition for availing of these flats will be not possessing any landed property or flat or housing within 20 km diameter from the area concerned.

The Housing department, through its restructured Brick Production Directorate, has overhauled operation and machinery of its own brick production unit, the only Mechanised Brick Factory at Palta, to produce quality bricks at low cost. The factory utilises the readily available gangetic silt from the nearby Palta Water Works of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and produces double strength and all surface plain 8"X4"X4" bricks to be sold at very economical rate.

With public facility in mind, the Housing department has recently brought in certain amendments to the West Bengal Apartment Ownership Act 1972, making it simplified more convenient. For amicable settlement of issues, if any, formation of Apartment Owners' Association in every unit has been made mandatory under the Act.

Under the West Bengal Building (Regulation of Promotion of Construction and Transfer by Promoters) Act 1993, which deals with adjudication of disputes between the promoters and the prospective buyers in case of breach of agreement between the two parties, the department has decided to issue registration certificates and grant permission to the promoters through online process.

Therefore, it is now well established even in public perception that under the able, sincere and enthusiastic leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the government has not only taken the challenge to provide quality shelter for the people of the state, it is also moving fast towards implementation to that end.

Labour Welfare
Delivering the due

Politically, on paper though, they used to claim themselves to have been the representatives of the labour class. But what we get to see in a reality check? The actual labour class people were the most deprived during their tenure in government over three and a half decades.

Yes, we are talking about the earlier regime, which was ousted and replaced by the down-to-earth mass leader—Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee—who means what she says and does what she means to say.

Let's find out for ourselves.

The state Labour department has put up major landmarks during the tenure of the new government thus showing a new way in labour welfare. The Plan expenditure has increased from ₹ 330.76 crore during 2006-11 to ₹ 919.7 crore during 2011-16 while ₹ 330 crore has been allocated for the 2017-18 financial year.

The state government has achieved a milestone by providing benefits worth ₹ 880 crore by the end of the last financial year.

The state government has brought over one crore workers from the unorganised sectors under the social security scheme—Samajik Suraksha Yojana—in the past seven years. These one crore people would be given educational benefits for their children, support for marriage of their two daughters, health cards and other benefits. Such a scheme has not yet been introduced in any other state apart from Bengal and would be a model in giving social security to workers from the unorganised sectors before other states take the same route in the country.

Earlier, in April 2017, the state government had merged all the five schemes to one and named it Samajik Suraksha Yojana. The convergence of the schemes has benefitted the people from different unorganised sectors and self employed youth, said the Minister adding that total four crore people are being benefitted with one crore coming under the scheme as on an average there are four family members in each of the houses.



The Samajik Suraksha Yojana, it may be mentioned here, was introduced converging State Assistance Scheme for Provident Fund for Unorganised Sector, West Bengal Unorganised Sector Workers' Health Security Scheme, Social Security Scheme for Construction Workers, West Bengal Transport Workers' Social Security Scheme and West Bengal Bidi Workers' Welfare Scheme.

New enrollment of 1,80,870 unorganized workers have been done during 2016-2017, under the State Assisted Scheme of Provident Fund For Unorganised Workers (SASPFUW).

Registration of beneficiaries under BOCWA (Building and Other Construction Workers Act) has increased almost 10 times during the last seven years, with respect to the period of 2007-11, and the disbursed amount has increased almost 34 times, compared over the same time periods.

In order to create more job opportunities in government service for the youth, the state government has taken significant initiatives. The upper age limit for recruitment to Gr A posts has been raised from 32 years to 39 years. The upper age limit for the SC-ST candidates are now raised to 41 years for Gr A posts and 44 years for Gr B posts while it is 39 years and 42 years, respectively now for the OBC candidates.

Under the Yuvashree Scheme, major initiative of the state government, administered by the Labour department, financial assistance of ₹ 1,500 per month has been extended to more than one lakh job-seekers enrolled in the Employment Bank.

Shramik Melas are being organized at different places of the state for awareness generation about welfare schemes, labourers' rights etc.

As far as the Samajik Mukti Cards are concerned, 31.50 lakh such smart cards, facilitating prompt payment of financial benefits—a brainchild of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee—have been issued to the unorganized workers.

In regard to the Self Help Groups, benefit worth ₹ 2,12,48,584 was distributed among as many as 1,669 beneficiaries. The members of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been getting different insurance facilities only by depositing ₹ 25 per month.

Besides, in order to provide better housing, sanitary and drinking water facilities in the tea



garden, a West Bengal Tea Plantation Employees' Welfare Fund of ₹ 100 crore has been set up. This fund will also be utilized for revival of the sick or the closed tea gardens. A separate Board has been set up to administer this fund.

Apart from this fund, the wage of the tea garden workers has also been hiked recently. A tripartite meeting with the managements of tea gardens and the trade unions at Uttarkanya on February 3, 2018, the state government has settled for a hike in the daily wages of tea garden workers by ₹ 17.50. The revised daily wages will now be hiked from ₹ 132.50 to ₹ 150.

The West Bengal government is trying its best to make life easier for everyone linked to the tea industry. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee takes a special interest in ensuring that this agricultural heritage of the state gets all the help possible.

This sweet will of hers has been best reflected in the Budget proposals the state Finance Minister presented at the state Assembly on February 7, 2018. It was proposed in the Budget speech to exempt the state's tea gardens fully from agricultural income tax for the upcoming financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Besides, the Finance Minister also announced the exemption of education cess and rural employment cess on green tea leaves for the 2018-19 financial year.

In addition, the government has also been providing with a special package of 35 kg of foodgrains under the Khadya Sathi Scheme for tea garden workers and their families in the sick and closed gardens, among other affected groups. For the workers and non-workers and their families in the other tea gardens, which includes the three Hill subdivisions of Darjeeling district, there is the normal subsidy through the Khadya Sathi Scheme.

All these have resulted in a remarkable decrease in labour unrest in the state. Mandays lost due to strike has come down from 94 lakh in 2010-11 to nil till date.

Minority Affairs
The Major Initiatives

One of the major landmarks of inclusive development that has been taking place in the state over the last six and a half years is the people belonging to the minority communities getting their due share of all-round growth as she set her priority on accelerated development of the minorities with a view to uplifting their socio-economic and educational status. Under her visionary leadership, the state Minority Affairs & Madrasah Education department as well as the West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation have taken up major measures in this regard and struck significant achievements over the years. Here we produce some of the pathbreaking measures taken up in the new regime in the state since 2011.

Budgetary Allocation & Creation of Assets

- Plan Budget has been increased six times to a record ₹ 2815 crore in 2017-18 from ₹ 472 crore in 2010-11.
- More than ₹ 200 crore has been released under IMDP (Integrated Minority Development Programme) to meet critical infrastructural gaps in 31 IMDP Blocks.
- West Bengal stands first in the country with respect to drawal and utilization of MSDP (Multi-Sectoral Development Programme) fund during the 12th Plan period. More than ₹ 2400 crore has been released to bridge critical infrastructural gaps in 151 Minority Concentrated Blocks during 2011-2017.
- Under this scheme, more than 12,000 classrooms, more than 12,000 ICDS Centres, more than 1000 Health Centres and more than 8000 drinking water facilities have been constructed during this period to augment critical infrastructure in rural areas.
- Reservation in Government Sector and Higher Education :
- By introducing a new legislation, the list of OBCs in West Bengal has been extended to include additional 107 Muslim communities. As a result, more than 97% of Muslim population of the State has been recognized as OBC and thus become eligible for reservation in Government jobs and higher education.
- 17% reservation in State Government jobs for OBC category has also been introduced.

Development Board

- West Bengal Paharia Minorities Development Board has been established with an objective of more focused development of minorities of the Hill Region. An initial allotment of ₹ 10 crore has been released for this purpose.

Scholarships and Loans

- More than 1 crore 24 lakh minority students have been awarded scholarships (an all-time





record) during 2011-2017, so far, compared to about 9 lakh scholarships awarded during 2005-2011.

- This signifies an amount of ₹ 2714 crore scholarships disbursed during 2011-2017, so far, compared to about ' 172 crore scholarships disbursed during 2005-2011.
- Almost 7.5 lakh minority youths & SHGs have been provided with Term Loans and Micro Credit to create sustainable employment during 2011-2017, so far, compared to about 1.5 lakh provided during 2005-2011.
- This translates to about ₹ 1054 crore Term Loans and Micro Credit disbursed during 2011-2017, so far, compared to about ₹ 230 crore disbursed during 2005-2011.

Educational Uplift

- State-of-the-art Aliah University has been established in New Town with an additional campus at Park Circus project cost of ₹ 517 crore.
- With a view to boost technical education and employability of youths, eight new Polytechnics and 39 new ITIs are being set up in the Minority Concentrated Areas. So far, four new Polytechnics and 22 new ITIs have been constructed.
- English medium Madrasahs are being set up all across the State to fulfill the aspiration of younger generation modern education. Already nine such Madrasahs are functional, so far.
- To usher in educational uplift, 419 hostels for minority students are being set up across the State at a co of more than ₹ 400 crore. Out of these, 147 hostels have been operationalised so far.

Skill Development and Employment

- Vocational and Skill Development Training





Programmes have been restructured following the Modular Employability Skill (MES) norms. Almost 1.5 lakh youths have been provided training, so far. Another batch of about 30,000 youths is undergoing training at present.

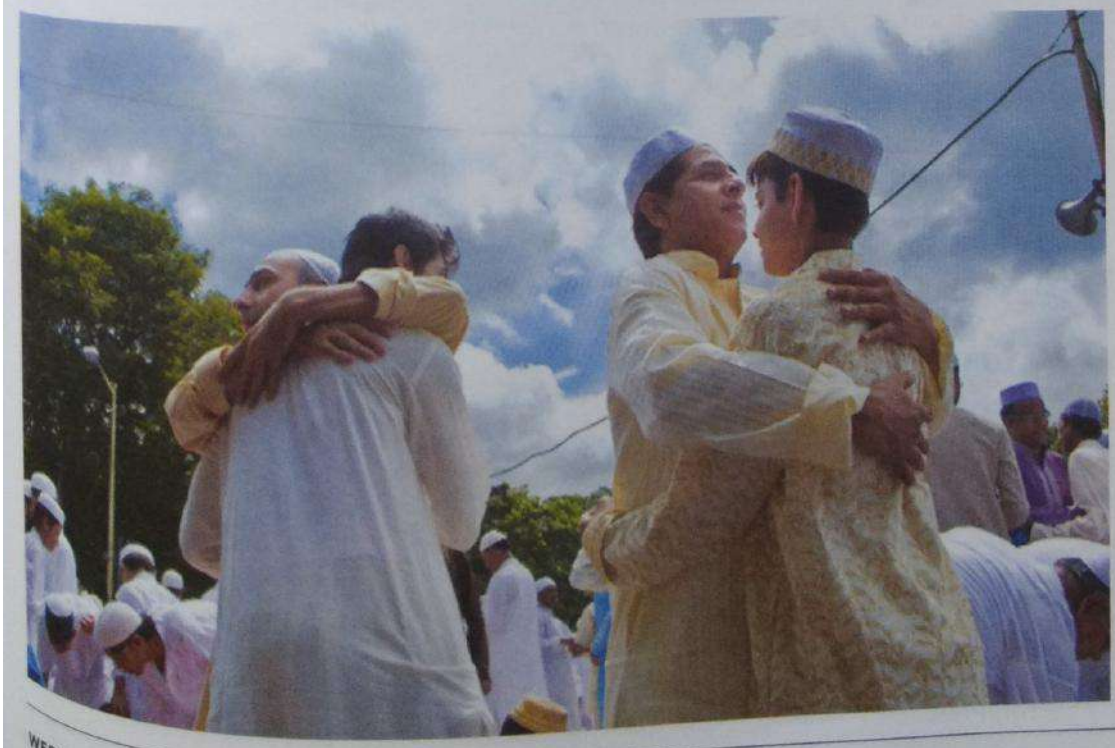
• 302 'Karmatirthas' (Marketing Hubs) are being set up at a project cost of more than ₹ 740 crore for providing employment opportunities to minority youths and SHGs in Minority Concentrated Areas.

• Housing

• In order to improve the quality of life of minority communities in West Bengal and to fulfill the commitment of the State Government of providing 'Shelter for All', almost 1.5 lakh housing units have been constructed under various housing schemes at a cost of ₹ 1200 crore so far.

Special Measures

• West Bengal Official Language (Amendment) Act, 2012 has been enacted to provide languages like Urdu, Nepali, Gurumukhi etc, the status of





Official Languages in areas having more than 10% people speaking these languages. This legislation has in effect redressed the long pending demand of the people speaking these languages to interact in their mother tongue in government offices.

- The budgetary allocation of West Bengal Urdu Academy has been enhanced by over five times, during the last six years.

Minority Bhavans

- To consolidate minority welfare activities, Minority Bhavans have been set up in every District Headquarters. So far, 19 such Bhavans are functional.

Haj Pilgrimage

- New state-of-the-art Haj House named 'Madinatul Hujjaj' has been in New Town at a cost of ₹ 100 crore.
- A record number of almost 60,000 Haj Pilgrims have performed Haj Pilgrimage, so far, during the last six years with active support from the State Government.

Boundary Walls around Graveyards

- In order to protect the dignity of the departed, boundary walls around almost 3500 graveyards belonging to minority communities are being constructed. More than ₹ 300 crore has been released for this purpose. So far, boundary walls around 1700 graveyards have been completed.

Social Activities

- Almost 65,000 Imams and Moazzins have been deployed by West Bengal Board of Auqaf, so far, to aid the government in generating public awareness regarding dropouts in schools and Madrasahs, immunization, sanitation and other social issues. They are also helping the Board of Auqaf in protecting Auqaf properties.



West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (WBMDFC)

The WBMDFC is also providing Term Loan up to ₹ 5 lakh to the persons belonging to the notified minority communities such as Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and Parsees for their economic uplift, applications for which are received round the year. Here are some of the success stories of both the individuals and the women's self-help groups.

Sports & Youth Services
Realising the aspirations

In its quest to spread sports activities to the grass-root level, the West Bengal government has been following a consistent policy to support sports organisations, clubs, eminent sportspersons and budding talent in a manner that will, hopefully, place a successful system of producing champions in the next few years.

The Sports department, headed by Minister-in-Charge, Aroop Biswas, and the entire team led by Principal Secretary, Sayeed Ahmed Baba, and his dedicated team of officers, have left no stone unturned to realise the dream of "Sonar Bangla" in sport by the sports loving Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

It was her love for sport and sportspersons that had a terrific impact on the sports policy of the state which came into being in 2015. Never in the history of West Bengal had a Chief Minister taken so much interest in sport. She has rolled out the best of support, be it financial, infrastructural or moral, the results of which would be visible in a few years time.

Starved off sponsorship of any kind, the most crucial part of the system of sports management, the State Sports Associations were brought under the ambit of government support with a grant of ₹ 5 lakh each. This proved the masterstroke as the associations galvanised into action and began a State-wide talent hunt and nurturing programme just a year back. In a way this move reactivated some of the defunct association while helping already active associations to double up their activities. As many as 31 state associations have been brought under the scheme out of 32. The last was Bengal Olympic Association, the parent body of all sports associations in West Bengal.

Many keep asking what has been the sports promotion policy of West Bengal Government. The year government took charge of West Bengal in 2011-12 the allocation for sport was ₹ 56 crore. For the financial year 2017-18 the allocation stood at a whooping ₹ 254.40 crore.

In short, the State Government's priority was to create infrastructure or modernise such





as stadiums, swimming pools, sports academies, among other things. Having done that, the State Government had to ensure identification and selection of talents for training in sports academies. This was followed by an effective system of coaching at the grass-root level. To buttress the above, sports equipment were distributed to ensure the continuity of activities. And finally the financial support to encourage and motivate the sportspersons, associations and clubs to sustain the momentum.

A table to show a steady increase in sports budget allocation:

FINANCIAL YEAR	BP (IN ₹ CRORE)	EXPENDITURE (IN ₹ CRORE)
2011-12	56.00	41.87
2012-13	91.01	72.31
2013-14	128.25	100.69
2014-15	142.00	134.58
2015-16	180.80	176.01
2016-17	244.88	237.21
2017-18	254.40	

The State Government's crowning glory has undoubtedly been the successful hosting of the FIFA Under-17 World Cup. To turn the dream into a reality, the Government spent more than ₹ 135 crore on renovation and up gradation work of Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan to ensure that the gigantic stadium became FIFA compliant and to ensure that all work including beautification were completed on time.

It is pertinent to mention here that the renovated Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan was vested with the responsibility for holding 11 World Cup matches including the quarter-final, semi-final and the final of the World Cup which was unique in the history of FIFA. The stadium has also been recognized as the best among all other stadiums that hosted FIFA U-17 World Cup matches in India in terms of number of spectators present in a single stadium.

Honouring the greatest in the field of sport

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, at a ceremony held at Netaji Indoor Stadium on January 24, 2018, conferred Khel Samman Award to 11 prominent sports persons with a cash prize of ₹ 50,000 each, Krira Guru Award to one renowned coach with a cash prize of ₹ 1,00,000, Banglar Gourav Award to 13 renowned Sports personalities of various disciplines with a cash prize of ₹ 1,00,000 each and the Lifetime Achievement Award to Rita Sen and Arun Ghosh with a cash prize of ₹ 5,00,000 each.

Bishesh Samman Award was also conferred to 12 renowned Sports personalities along with the 71st Santosh Trophy winning Bengal Football team to their success in the same programme. An amount of ₹ 10,00,000 was given away to woman cricket player Jhulan Goswami for her



outstanding performance in the World Cup. Sourav Kothari, Soumyajit Ghosh, Sayani Das and others were also awarded with cash prizes along with Bishesh Samman Award for their outstanding performances in National or International events.

The following table will give year-wise breakup of awards:

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Khel Samman	26	19	31	13	11	100
Banglar Gaurav	22	31	46	15	13	127
Krira Guru	12	6	11	5	1	35
Lifetime Achievement	2	2	2	2	2	10
Bishes Samman	-	-	-	6	13	19

Till date, 290 sportspersons, including the 71st Santosh Trophy winning Bengal football team members, have been honoured.

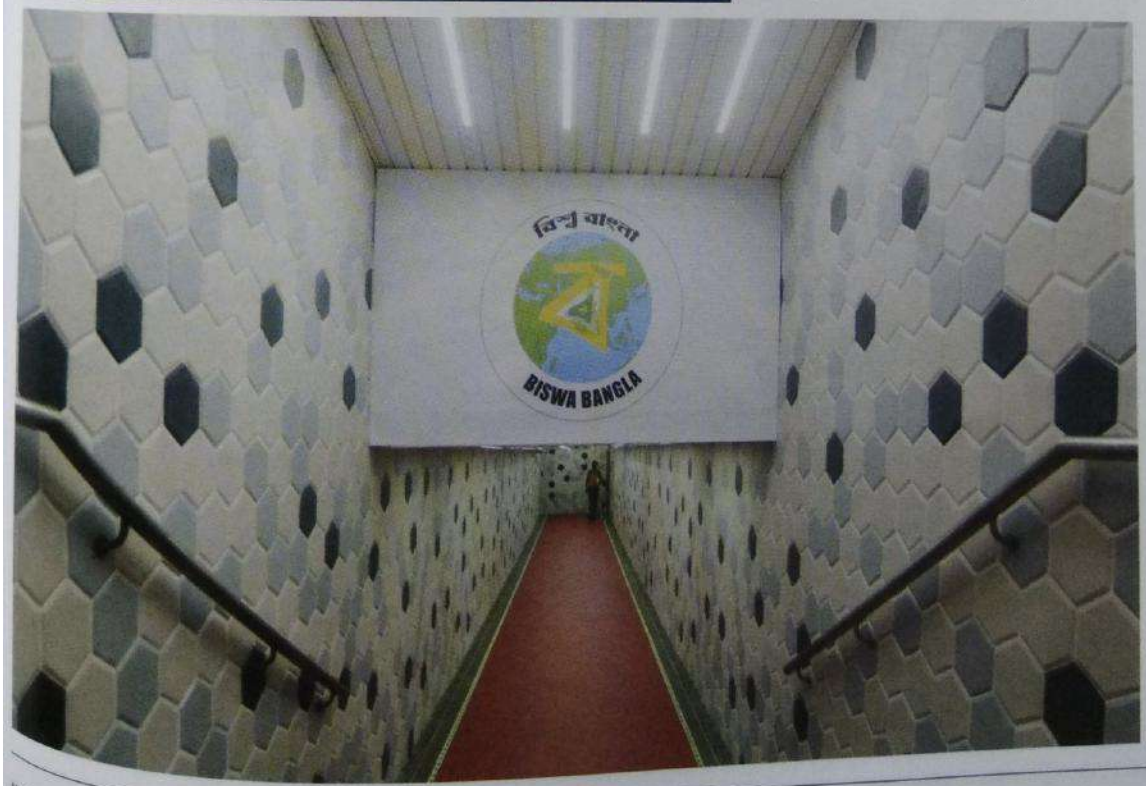
The following are some of the key infrastructural development in West Bengal.

A sports complex named as 'Biswa Banga Krirangan' has been set up at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has also been signed and implemented with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) so that the latter take up the administrative control of the complex and give a shape to one of the most important centres of excellence in India.

For unearthing the sports talents and provide them with proper training, a few Sports Academies have been taken up with full facilities.

Bengal Football Academy, Khardah, North 24 Parganas

Bengal Football Academy, the

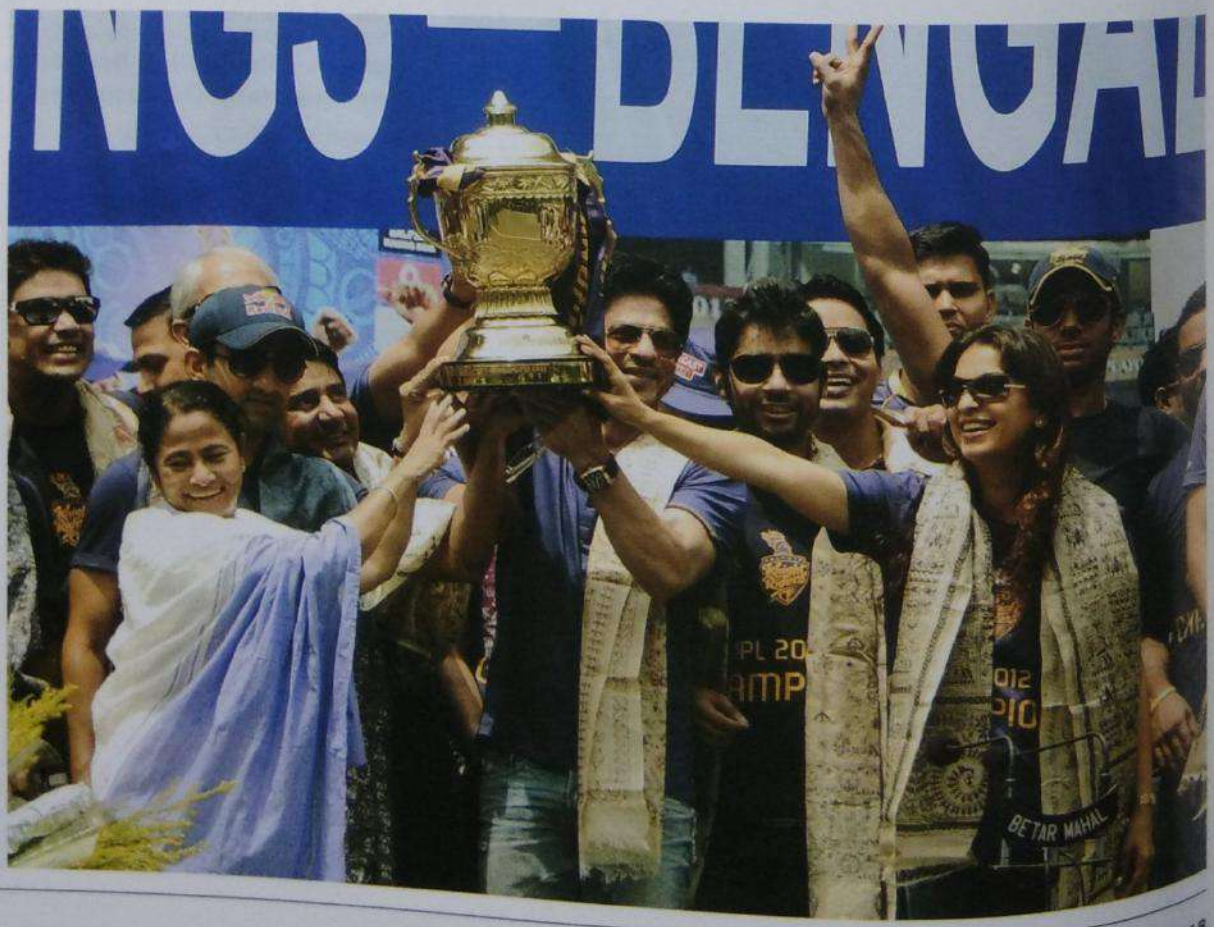




only of its kind in the entire country, has been inaugurated by the Chief Minister on September 28, 2013, at Vivekananda Stadium, Khardah, North 24 Parganas. The Academy has already been affiliated to the All India Football Federation and the academy boys have participated in the under-18 Youth League. The academy has been running successfully with 40 trainees. Steps are being taken to provide training to the wards under the guidance of professional and residential coaches.

Archery Academy at Jhargram

With the inspiration of Chief Minister, construction of an Archery Academy at Jhargram was competed for an overall development of Jangalmahal area. The project is operational now. The Director, coaches and other support staff have been engaged to run the academy successfully. At present the 32 meritorious cadets, selected from different corners of the state, are undergoing training.





Bengal Tennis Academy at Salt Lake

A Tennis Academy at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan, Salt Lake, has been set up by the department of Youth Services and Sports, in association with the Bengal Tennis Association. Presently, the selection of trainees across the state is under process. The department will sponsor fifty children who will be trained free of cost at this academy by certified coaches.

They apart, initiatives have been taken to set up a few other sports academies which are as follows:

1) State Hockey Academy at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan, Salt Lake

2) Swimming Academy at Beleghata Subhas Sarobar, Kolkata

3) Athletics Academy at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan, Salt Lake

4) Table Tennis Academy, Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan, Salt Lake

Creation of sports infrastructure

The government has taken many initiatives for creation of sports infrastructure like stadium, playground and sports academy at the sub-division and district level to enable more and more youth to participate in sports and Games for accelerating their physical and mental development right from the grass-root level.

Introduction of Swastha Sathi Scheme for eminent former sportspersons

In a programme to felicitate distinguished sportspersons of West Bengal on January 24, 2018, at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Chief Minister announced that the Government was going to extend the scope of Swastha Sathi scheme. As per the scheme, former state sportspersons, who had participated in international, national and state level sports competitions, would get health care facilities.

Pension to Former Olympians

The pension programme was introduced by the Youth Services department to acknowledge the contribution of former Olympians and extend humble assistance to them in their old age. Initially the programme was launched by providing a token pension to 17 ex-Olympians. Presently only four such sports personalities are getting the pension facility as other recipients are no more. Since the present government assumed power, the amount of the pension has gradually been enhanced from ₹ 2,000 per month to ₹ 12,000 per month.



Distribution of sports goods

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the last financial year announced that measures should have to be taken so that sports may become a mandatory in school education. Accordingly the sports department of Government of West Bengal decided to provide footballs to each secondary and higher secondary schools and high madrasahs in the State in the last financial year.

After the decision to organize the FIFA U-17 World Cup at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan was finalized, the football distribution programme was given an extended shape to popularize the sport all over the state in a bigger way. Accordingly, five footballs were distributed to all secondary and higher secondary schools, high madrasahs, colleges along with all clubs/ organizations of our state who received financial grant from the Sports department. Moreover, ten footballs were also given to all universities in the state along with all Police Lines and Battalions. Altogether, 1,25,000 footballs were distributed under the scheme.

'KHELASHREE' scheme

The department of Youth Services and Sports, in a programme held on January 24, 27 and February 4, 2018, at the Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata, extended financial assistance of ₹ 2,00,000 to about 4,300 new clubs and organizations and ₹ 1,00,000 only to about 10,645 clubs/organizations previously brought under the Khelashree scheme for the purpose of development of sports and sports infrastructure. Till date, about 20,000 clubs/organisations have been brought under this scheme.

S. Saba Nayakan
(The author is retired Sports Editor, The Hindu)

Information Technology & Electronics
Taking the state to another level

Keeping the present day reality in mind, one can hardly deny or undermine the indispensability of the use of information technology in literally every walk of our lives. The Government of West Bengal has risen up to the occasion and has been beefing up its Information Technology & Electronics department ever since the new regime took over in the year 2011.

The Government of West Bengal under the visionary leadership of the Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, has been instrumental in spreading the benefits of IT based economy, infrastructure and good governance among each and every section of the society up to the remotest parts of the state.

The aim of the state government is not only to create an enabling ecosystem for the growth and ease of doing business for IT and Electronics industry and attract investments from the sector but also to leverage Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a medium of enabling information and service delivery to the common people across.

The state Information Technology & Electronics department, through its tenacious efforts of spreading IT activities in Tier-II and Tier-III locations, has already set up and operationalized 11 new IT parks out of 18 planned. These completed IT parks are Durgapur (Phase-II), Siliguri (Phase-II), Kharagpur,



Asansol, Bolpur, Haldia, Howrah, Kalyani, Rajarhat, Barjora and Purulia. The remaining IT parks of Taratala, Bantala, Krishnanagar, Malda, Coochbehar, Belur and Siliguri (Phase-III) are also in different stages of progress now. These IT Parks will have a bouquet of facilities including plug & play facilities for IT startups and software companies in addition to uninterrupted power supply, robust bandwidth and common facilities to suit the needs of IT companies.

When fully occupied, these IT Parks are bound to create direct as well as indirect employment opportunities contributing to better the socio-economic condition of the respective locations.

To provide an ecosystem for local Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) industry in the state, the government has set up the Sonarpur Hardware Park on 11 acres of land where plots are ready for allotment to the hardware industry.

In line with the Government of India Hardware Policy and Schemes, work on setting up two Greenfield Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) at Naihati and Falta is also progressing well.

For the Naihati EMC on 70 acre of land and the Falta EMC on 58 acres of land, final approvals from the union government have already been received, engineering consultant has been selected and development work is under progress.

As local entrepreneurship plays an important role in the development and growth of IT economy, the state government has identified the start-up initiative as a growth engine for IT industry in West Bengal. The state government has been supporting a unique initiative of NASSCOM, titled NASSCOM 10000 Startup Warehouse, which is aimed at creating massive awareness about tech-entrepreneurship as a preferred career option, building entrepreneurial capability, creating a vibrant online community to link investors, mentors and IT entrepreneurs and incubating and funding quality startups. The warehouse provides the IT entrepreneurs with affordable and accessible co-working space shared with fellow entrepreneurs, plug & play services, access to mentor support, workshops and startup events.

Apart from this, the government has also been planning a large-scale IT startup program along with a dedicated portal for providing active support and platform for incubation and funding of IT startup companies in partnership with the best accelerators and angel investor groups.

As per the latest survey report prepared by the state IT&E department, West Bengal had about 892 IT companies employing about 1,47,000 IT professionals directly. It may be noted that about 300 companies are working in the districts in Tier II and Tier III cities. This is an indication that efforts of the state government to take IT economy across the state has started paying dividends, as vindicated by a recent

Durgapur IT Park (Phase II)




Siliguri IT Park (Phase II)

NASSCOM estimate, which says that the IT sector in West Bengal is "growing at an impressive rate" of 16%, with employment growth rate pegged at 8% annually.

The IT Software & Services Export figure from the state in 2015-16 touched ₹ 15,000 crore with IT majors like TCS, Cognizant, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, IBM, Accenture, Capgemini, HCL, British Telecom and Ericsson leading the charge. Most of the major export-oriented IT companies are also expanding their operations in the state, which will further boost state's IT export turnover and employment figures in the sector.

It may be mentioned here that an Online Single Window Clearance System (OSWiCS) has been operational since February 2016, which provides 11 online services for statutory clearances and five online services related to registration for incentives for large industries. Under the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiative, a Single Sign-On (SSO) based access for 21 investor-related services of different departments through single window system has also been achieved. The state government is also planning to integrate most of the investor-related services of different departments under a new revamped Online Single Window Platform.

Besides, the West Bengal e-District portal is live in all districts with more than 40 online services operational with complete government workflow automation and end-to-end service delivery including facilities of e-Payment and SMS based status tracking. As it stands now, more than 4.49 lakh online service transactions have already taken place through e-District portal via different modes of Internet self-service, Common Service Centres and Citizen Kiosks across the state. This indicates a growing trend of outreach of the government services in electronic mode in all parts of the state. This figure is bound to increase manifold with more than 140 additional services already identified and being developed to be launched under e-District in 2017-18, which will benefit all the sections of the society and citizens through convenient, transparent, affordable and time-bound service delivery.

To leverage the potential of mobile technology in citizen-centric governance, the state IT department has integrated Mobile Service Delivery Gateway (MSDG) with various e-Governance applications for SMS-based status tracking and service notifications to the citizens.

The current server and rack space utilization in West Bengal State Data Centre (WBSDC) has crossed the levels of 99%. In the wake of increasing demand for hosting space for more online applications and services and recent technological advances in the areas of cyber security, cloud computing and energy efficiency, the state government is implementing a complete

revamp and expansion of WBSDC. Process for selection of System Integrator through open RFP for same is in advanced stages. The government has also implemented a Security Information & Event Management appliance (SIEM) in WBSDC to safeguard state government's digital data and information assets against growing threats of cyber attacks.

Furthermore, WBSWAN, the West Bengal State Wide Area Network, now horizontally connects more than 1300 government offices providing a robust network backbone up to the block level. Links up to subdivision level have been upgraded to Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) from the erstwhile copper cables for better network performance and bandwidth augmentation. The agreement with BSNL to implement the multi-protocol labeled switching (MPLS) architecture has been concluded, enhancing the reliability and availability of the WBSWAN to its users.

To fulfill its commitment for universal connectivity for every citizen, the state government has approved implementation of the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) from the district to the Gram Panchayat (GP) level, through a State Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) in joint partnership with Bharat Broadband Network Ltd (BBNL). The state government also granted free Right of Way (RoW) to BBNL so as to facilitate ongoing NOFN Phase-I implementation in the state to cover 262 Blocks and 2550 Gram Panchayats under broadband connectivity. Preparatory work for Phase-II implementation of the project such as GIS survey of electric poles of WBSEDCL for overhead OFC laying has also been initiated. The state government also provided its considerate views on draft Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 to DoT, GoI, which were finally notified by DoT in November, 2016.

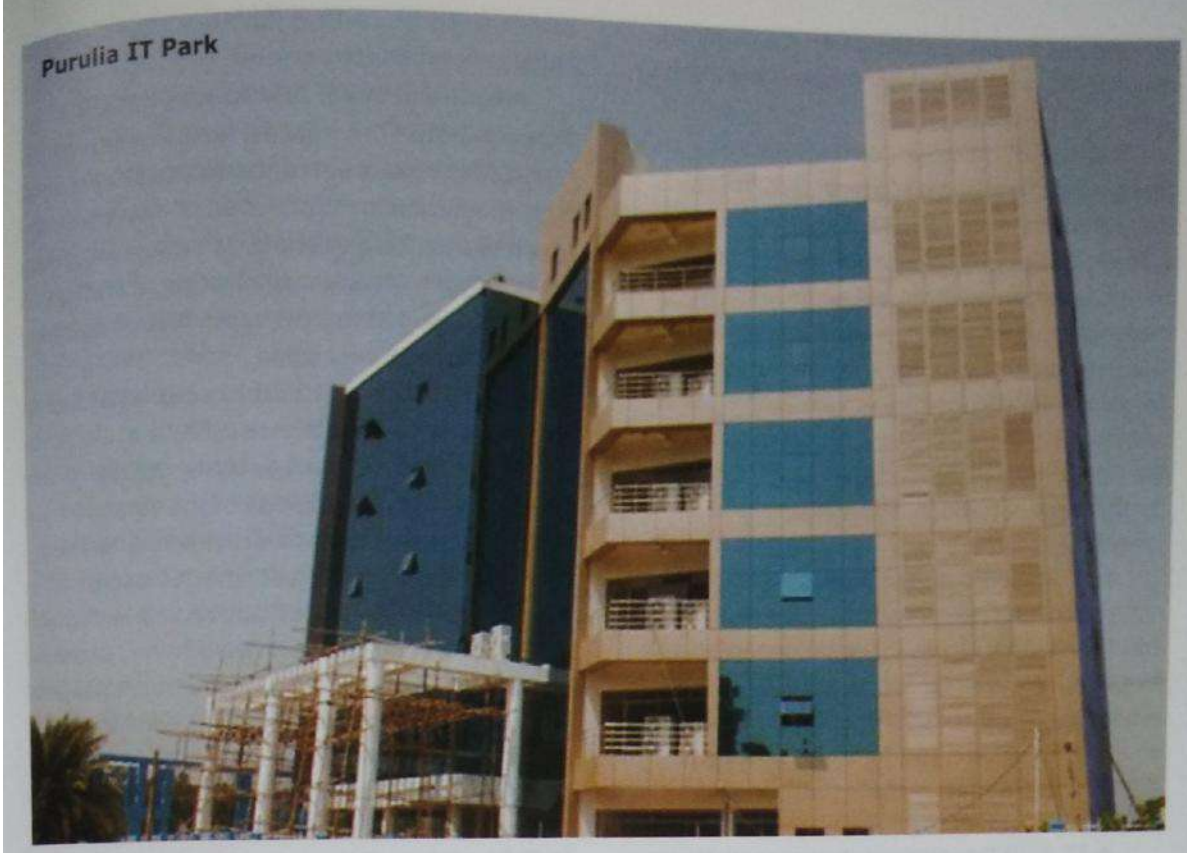
Let us, now, have a look at the significant activities towards new IT initiatives that have been triggered in the state IT department in the last financial year. The account will tell one and all the story as to how the department has made great strides towards transforming the state to a conducive environment for both business and citizen in the state.

+ Improving the Ease of Doing Business

✓ **Single Sign-on:** The Single Sign-on service provides an Investor/ Business with single login credentials to access and apply to the online services in Online Single Window Clearance System (OSWiCS) for 40 services. The project started on November 17, 2016 and was completed on January 11, 2017. This is the first step towards integration of many services and improving the Ease of Doing Business in the state.



Barjora IT Park



Purulia IT Park

✓ **Online Single Window Platform:** Around 76 G2B services (combining applications of all services) are being brought onto an Online Single Window Portal (OSWP) with dynamic online Common Application Form (CAF) for multiple services wherein the business entities have to provide documents only once. Where services are manual, workflow with all the necessary features of online application, online payment, online tracking, online communication of approval and online downloading of approval will be provided. This will be made available by May, 2017.

✓ **Online Workflow Based System for Manual Services:** There will be about 70 standalone services which will be made available online for the investors and businesses. These 146 G2B services would provide almost the entire gamut of approvals that businesses and investors need for starting and operating their businesses. Around 30 manual/ offline services of various Departments of Government of West Bengal are being made online.

• **Cyber Security Centre of Excellence:** This will be the first of its kind in Eastern India and will help create a Cyber Talent Pool and an ecosystem for a leadership position in Cyber Security in the country in general and in Eastern India in particular. The in-principle approval was granted by the Cabinet on July 20, 2016. The DPR has been prepared and is being considered for approval.

• **Courses on Data Science and Cyber Security:** Courses on Data Science and Cyber Security will be introduced in educational institutions to create skills in Data Science and Cyber Security. The in-principle approval for this was accorded by the Cabinet on July 20, 2016. The DPR for courses in data science is being prepared. The DPR for courses in cyber security is being considered for approval.

• **Single Mobile Platform for G2C and G2B services:** This will bring various e-governance services pertaining to citizens, investors and businesses, i.e., G2C and G2B services on a single mobile platform in an integrated manner so that multiple e-services can be accessed and availed of through a single mobile platform. This project has been approved and the RFP for this has been floated.

• **Revamping of West Bengal State Data Centre:** The requirements for a robust and secure State Data Centre have already been finalized and approved and the selection of the vendor is being made through a transparent bidding process. The implementation of the latest and sophisticated infrastructure will make the WBSDC one of the best-in-class State run Data Centre in India. The project is presently being worked on.

• **Improving the availability and reliability of the State Wide Area Network:** The Multiprotocol Label Switching is being implemented to improve the availability and

reliability of the Wide Area Network besides establishing new links and improving the existing links.

- **Outbound Dialer (OBD) Bulk Voice Messages System and Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS):** Through this system, G2G and G2C types of communication shall be possible with the option for sending messages in English, Hindi and Bengali languages. The Departments can use it to get feedback on the delivery of existing services and also to understand the expectations of citizens from the Department. The Vendor has been selected for this project through a transparent bidding process.
- **IT Start-up action plan:** The Start-up Action Plan proposes innovative institutional and financial structures for attracting angel investors and venture capital to the State for promoting entrepreneurship and IT investments and permitting start ups to bid for Government Projects. The project is being considered for approval.
- **IT Skill Development program:** The IT skill development programme is required for addressing the gap between demand and supply of skilled resources in the State of West Bengal in the IT/ITeS sector and to improve the employability of youth in the State. The project is being considered for approval.
- **National Level Institute of Data Science (NIDS):** A National level Institute of Data Science has been conceptualized to promote high end research on data science. The Institute would enable the creation of an ecosystem in data science by integrating mathematical, statistical, and computer science with other fields. The DPR for this is under preparation.
- **State Enterprise Architecture (SEA):** State Enterprise Architecture (SEA) is a framework for conducting analysis, design, planning and implementation of the vision, goal, strategies, functions, activities and desired outcomes and aims at creating a 360 degree view of a citizen across all touch points with the Government with faster service delivery. Decision on SEA is yet to be taken. IT department has also conceptualized Single Service Delivery Platform (SSDP). If decision on SEA is taken then SSDP initiatives will merge with SEA.
- **Single Service Delivery Platform (SSDP) with an Enterprise Service Bus:** The objective of implementation of a Single Service Delivery Platform (SSDP) is to provide a facility where all the services (G2C, G2B, G2G services) and information to citizens through multiple

Rajarhat IT Park



service delivery channels like computers, mobile, kiosks etc. The RFP is being prepared.

• **Digital Depository:** The first of its kind initiative in a State in India by which the Govt. Departments/ Institutions/ Organizations as well as private entities like schools, colleges, universities, hospitals etc shall be able to deposit, access and easily authenticate electronically signed important documents such as School Leaving Certificates, College Degrees, Academic Awards, Mark Sheets, Licenses, Experience certificates and other testimonials etc. thus eliminating the use of physical documents. Project has been approved. RFP is floated.

• **Bengalathon:** Bengalathon is conceptualized as India's First State Level Hackathon that spans all districts across the State. As part of this Hackathon, citizens will participate in an initiative to conceptualize ideas and implement prototypes in the areas of Information Technology, sustainability, education, energy, etc. The project is being considered for approval.

+ **Proposed MoUs being considered for approval:**

✓ **MoU between WBEIDC & Data Science Foundation:** MoU has been proposed between WBEIDC and Data Science foundation regarding 'Intelligent Agriculture' and 'Intelligent Health Tracking'. Data Science foundation proposes to use the applications of Big Data to suggest recommendations / actions for these projects.

✓ **MoU between WBEIDC & Chemtrols Infotech:** MoU has been proposed between WBEIDC and Chemtrols Infotech regarding Software Service Delivery Centre in West Bengal.

✓ **MoU between WBEIDC and Schneider Electric India:** A MoU has been proposed between WBEIDC and Schneider Electric Infrastructure Ltd. for co-innovating certain technology areas like Smart grid, Self healing, feeder Automation in the Electrical distribution network.

• **IT Parks:** Eleven IT Parks have already been made operational in the Tier-II/III cities, the most recent one being at Haldia, which was inaugurated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on January 2nd, 2017. Work has started for five more IT Parks, two Hardware Parks and two Electronics Manufacturing Clusters.

The following is the achievements of the state IT department during the time period of January 2016 to March 2017:

✓ Completion and commissioning of Siliguri IT Park (Ph-II)

✓ Completion and commissioning of Kharagpur IT Park

✓ Completion and commissioning of Bolpur IT Park

✓ Completion and commissioning of Kalyani IT Park

✓ Completion and commissioning of Howrah IT Park

✓ Completion and commissioning of Sonarpur Hardware Park

✓ Completion of actual site execution for Haldia IT Park

✓ Completion of 85 % of site execution for Taratala IT Park

✓ Commencement of work at Malda IT Park and reaching 20 % completion of site execution.

✓ Commencement of work at Siliguri IT Park (Ph-III) and reaching 25 % completion of site execution.

✓ Commencement of work at Krishnanagar IT Park and reaching 40 % completion of site execution.

✓ Commencement of site mobilization work for Bantala IT Park after observing all relevant formalities.

✓ Commencement of site work at EMC, Falta and reaching 35 % completion of site execution for boundary wall.

✓ Commencement of site work at EMC, Naihati and reaching 15 % completion of boundary wall.

✓ Commencement and proceedings on different pre-construction activities for Kalyani Hardware Park.

✓ Progress in different EODB activities including BRAP, SOP, Associate Consultant selection etc.

✓ Procedural formalities towards preparation of DPR for state of the art IT Project at plot BN-4, Sec V, Salt Lake City.

ON E-GOVERNANCE

Digital Governance or e-governance not only acts as a catalyst to the government's administrative and service delivery productivity thereby boosting overall economy of the state, it also creates a stronger, better informed and connected society. Therefore, the Government of West Bengal has been tirelessly implementing various e-governance initiatives, which include citizen-centric applications for delivery of Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services along with



Card (EPIC) Number has been widely used by lakhs of citizens for SMS-based searches through SMS to 51969 or 166.

Implementation of an Outbound Dialer (OBD) based Bulk Voice Messages system and Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) is also underway. Through this system, Government to Government (G2G) and Government to Citizens (G2C) types of communication will be possible by sending audio messages in English, Hindi and Bengali languages anytime, anywhere by the state government. The outbound voice message will also be used for collecting information/ feedback from citizens through interactive voice response system (IVRS), wherein no new call has to be initiated by the citizen for providing the complaints/ feedback etc. Basic audio messaging system shall be more suitable to those Mobile subscribers who are not conversant with the nitty-gritty of using other features of mobile phones like reading/writing SMSes.

+ Other initiatives

Among other initiatives, the state government is also planning to implement a state-specific digital depository platform where the government departments/institutions as well as private institutions/ organisations shall be able to keep their digitally signed documents of the citizens like School Leaving Certificate, Medical Certificate, College Degree, Academic Awards, Mark Sheets, Licenses and other such documents. The objective of the project is to create a platform for issuance and verification of documents and certificates in a paperless way, thus eliminating the use of physical documents.

The state government is also planning to set up a Cyber Security Centre of Excellence with a goal of addressing pressing cyber security problems faced by governments and businesses with practical, standards-based solutions using commercially viable technologies and collaboration of cyber security experts from industry and academia. The initiative will focus on setting up Cyber Security infrastructure and developing a talent pool of Cyber Security professionals out of plain IT students and professionals of the State. This will also be an important step in increasing employability of the IT students considering ever-increasing importance of Cyber Security in IT industry.

To harness the talent of the state by blending the fields of mathematics, statistics, computer science, technology and business acumen into the newly evolving and much in-demand field of Data Science, the state government is planning to set up a National Level Data Science Institute in the state to impart sharply focused, industry-oriented Data Science courses and programs.

Apart from that, the state government, through its IT&E department, had also prepared and put in place Software Standards for Government Applications from the viewpoint of information security, standard software coding and maintenance practices for government software applications.

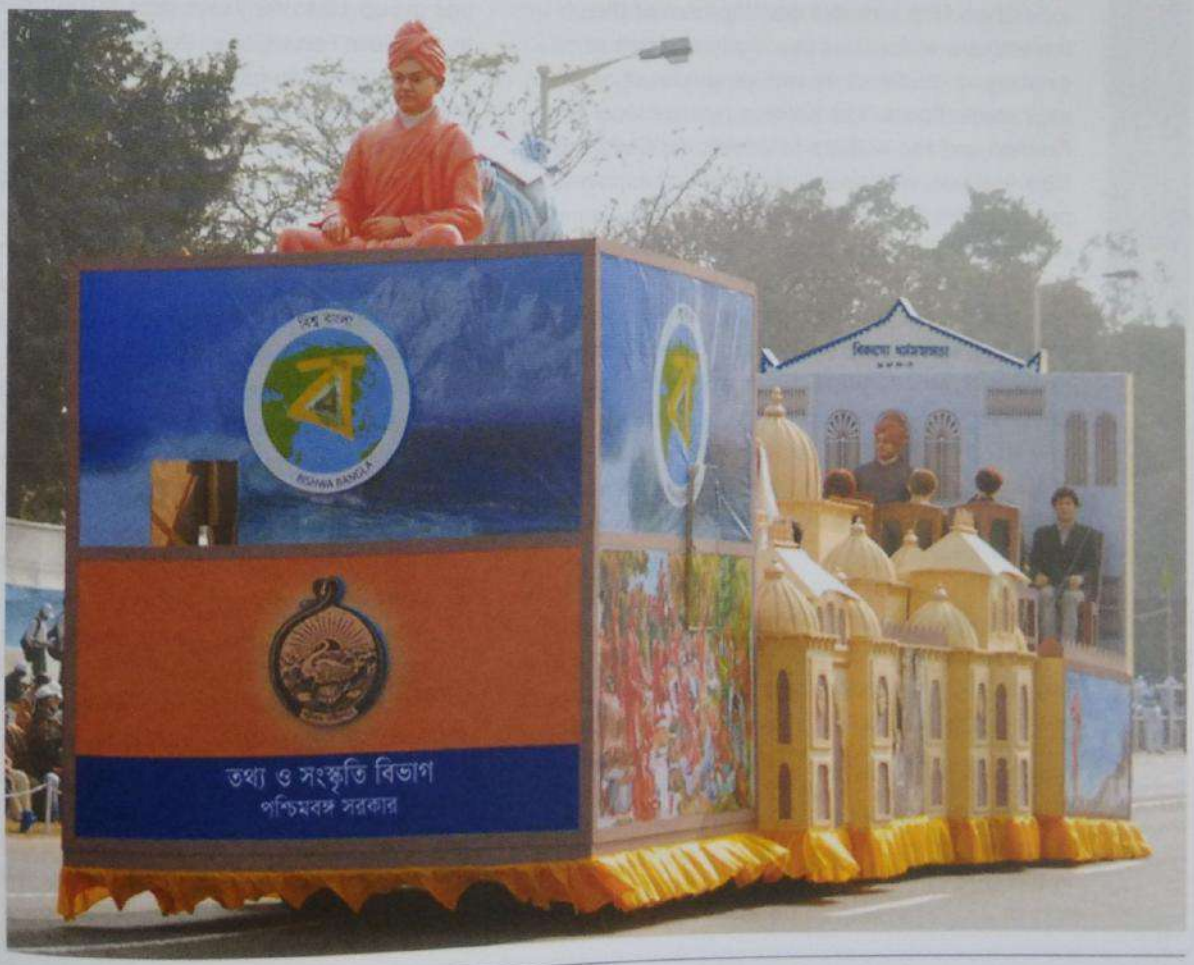
Through all above initiatives, the state government is leveraging IT as a vehicle for the purposes of employment generation, socio-economic uplift, good governance and easy, affordable access to the government services and administration across the state.

Information & Cultural Affairs

Reaching the people the finer way

Bengal is proud of its culture and heritage, and quite justifiably so. And the onus of preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of Bengal as well as dissemination of information about the activities and achievements of the state government lies on its Information & Cultural Affairs department. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is also in charge of the I&CA department and Indranil Sen, a renowned vocalist by his own right, is the Minister of State of the department. Thus, under such able leadership, the Information & Cultural Affairs department has been working tirelessly over these many years to meet its goal through its four Directorates such as Information, Culture, Films, and Archaeology & Museums.

The Information Directorate is responsible for disseminating information as well as carrying out works relating to rural information, exhibitions, information networking and media management, publication, advertisements, hospitality, observing protocol and state ceremonies while the role of





the Culture Directorate is to nurture, promote and develop all kinds of cultural activities and the folk culture of the state. Constant endeavor and variety of activities towards promotion and preservation of art and culture through different Academies help this directorate to implement the policies of the state government.

Alongside, the Film Directorate strives for allround development of the state's thriving film industry, which includes development of the infrastructural facilities like modernization of existing studio floors as well as construction of new studio floors. The Kolkata International Film Festival and the Kolkata International Children's Film Festival, with the participation of eminent personalities from India and abroad, are also organized by the directorate. Preservation of important documentary and feature films and providing assistance to the ailing cinema halls also fall under the purview of this directorate, along with ameliorating the conditions of the television and cine workers.

The Directorate of Archaeology & Museums is taking active care for preservation of State Protected Monuments and Heritage Sites. The directorate maintains the State Archaeological Museum in Kolkata with seven display galleries. Six Districts Museums are also maintained.

The principal activities that the department has excelled in over the last seven years can be enumerated as it follows.

Financial Assistance

Lok Prasar Prakalpa: The state government has launched its flagship project "Lok Prasar Prakalpa" in the year 2014 with a view to revitalize the folk arts of Bengal as well as for ensuring a steady means of livelihood for the state's folk artistes. Their talent is utilized in a coherent campaign to spread the developmental message of the government across the state and improving the socio-economic condition of the state's folk artistes. Already, 1 lakh 94 thousand 447 folk artistes have been included in this financial assistance scheme of the state government.

Every eligible folk artiste belonging to the age group 18 to 60 years gets ₹ 1000 per month as Retainer Fee while a Pension of ₹ 1,000 per month is given to folk artistes over 60 years of age. Besides, on the performance day, each artiste gets ₹ 1000 as Performance Fee.

The enlisted folk artistes propagate different unique schemes of the state government such as Kanyashree, Yuvashree, Sikshasree etc through their performances. This project has brought tremendous enthusiasm among the folk artistes of Bengal.

Maavoi—West Bengal Health Scheme for the Journalists, 2016: This is a health insurance scheme for all the journalists accredited with the government. A dedicated cell has been created within the I&CA department for prompt disposal of claims. In the 2017-18 financial year, ₹ 31.0 lakh has been released under the Maavoi Scheme.

West Bengal Pension Scheme for Journalists: As recognition of their contribution to society, the Government of West Bengal has initiated since April 2018 a Pension Scheme for Journalists–both from the print and the electronic media–who are facing acute financial hardship in old age. There is the provision of a monthly pension of ₹ 2,500, which is to be renewed annually.



Medical Benefit Scheme for the Cine and Television Artistes and Technicians: The state government pays full premium for extending Group Health Insurance coverage for more than six thousand primary members along with spouse and two dependents. The total number of beneficiaries are around 24 thousand. The state government has decided to enhance the limit under this scheme from ₹ 1.5 lakh to ₹ 5 lakh so as to cover critical illnesses too. The scheme also provides Personal Accident coverage of ₹ 1 lakh for the primary members.

Literary and Cultural Pension Scheme: In order to provide financial assistance to the aged and needy artistes, the state government provides pension under the Literary and Cultural Pension Scheme.

Financial Assistance to Jatra Artistes: Monthly pension is also given to the aged and eminent Jatra artistes. One-time financial assistance ₹ 9,000 per head, too, is being provided to 528 Jatra artistes since the 2017-18 financial year.

Infrastructure Development

Cultural, Film and Television Infrastructure: Three important infrastructure development projects were initiated in the 2017-18 financial year, namely (i) the construction of Tele Academy Complex at Baruipur, South 24 Parganas with a total project cost of ₹ 132.05 crore; (ii) construction of open air theatre and new building at West Bengal State Music Academy complex with a total project cost of ₹ 19.00 crore and (iii) construction of one multi-storeyed multipurpose building at Cinema Centenary Building campus with a total project cost of ₹ 21.38 crore.

This department has also taken initiative for the construction of Baul Academy building at Kenduli, Birbhum, in collaboration with the state Tourism department at a cost of ₹ 9.99 crore.

In order to upgrade the cultural infrastructure across the state, repair and renovation works have been completed for Rabindra Sadan-Nandan Complex along with the construction of *Ektara*, an open air dais inside the Rabindra Sadan complex, Rathindra Mancha and Madhusudan Mancha. The repair and renovation of Rabindra Bhavans at Baruipur and Diamond Harbour have been completed while the repair and renovation of Rabindra Bhavans at Suri, Chinsurah and Balurghat are in full swing.

The department has also taken initiative for the construction of Lalan Mancha at Karimpur in Nadia district.

Construction of Office Buildings: Office buildings for the offices of the District Information & Cultural Officers in Purulia, 24-Parganas (South) and 24-Parganas (North) have been completed.

Archaeological Infrastructure: Initiatives have been taken to develop District Museums and for digitization of old documentation at State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata.

Recognition of Official Languages: The state government has notified Nepali, Urdu,



Hindi, Santhali, Oriya and Punjabi as the official languages of the state along of course with Bengali and English. Besides these, Kurukh language, the mothertongue of the Oraon tribe, is proposed to be recognized as an official language of West Bengal. Further, the state government has also taken up the process of conferring the 'official language' status on the Rajbanshi and Kamtapuri languages.

Information Networking and Media Management

The Information & Cultural Affairs department is entrusted with dissemination of various administrative news, notifications, circulars etc of the government to the media and to arrange press conferences, issue Press Accreditation Cards, Railway Passes to the journalists etc. Digital Management and Analysis Cell is being created for the purpose of digitally managing, analyzing and record keeping of all media releases.

Official Portal of the Government of West Bengal: The official Portal of the Government of West Bengal, egiyebangla.gov.in, is designed, developed and hosted by the Information & Cultural Affairs department. The objective of the portal is to provide a single window access to the information and services provided by the different departments of the Government of West Bengal. Efforts are on to make it more informative and user friendly.

Exhibitions: I&CA department organizes exhibitions at the international, national, state and district levels throughout the year. Central Exhibitions and Poster Exhibitions are arranged in various fairs and festivals for catering the messages of the government on different flagship programmes throughout the state.

Apart from the annual exhibitions organized at the West Bengal Pavilion at the India International Trade Fair (IITF) held at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, 73 state level exhibitions were organized on various occasions, 55 in the districts and 18 in Kolkata.

Hospitality: The department of Information & Cultural Affairs also plays an important role in extending state hospitality and in observing protocol functions during the visit of dignitaries and important delegations from India and abroad. In 2017-18, nearly 1800 dignitaries visited the state on different occasions.

Advertisements: Advertisements of all the government departments and corporations under various departments are nodally released for print and electronic media by the I&CA Department round the year.

Publications

The Department regularly publishes journals in six languages such as Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu, Santhali and Nepali. This apart, there are other publications including the second volume of Archaeology and Museum Directorate's Annual Journal and reprinting of the *Jelar Purakirti*

(district archaeological relics) *Series*.

The department has also published the works of Rabindranath Tagore in 17 volumes through its Paschimbanga Bangla Academy. The complete works of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay have also been published in five volumes.

Basumati Corporation Limited: The over 200-year old heritage building of Basumati Corporation Limited has been renovated by the department. Restoration of the exterior of the building and repairing of the interior, with complete renovation of the floors and roofs was done. Since June 2011, more than 50 classics published by the Basumati Sahitya Mandir have been reprinted and a few more are proposed to be reprinted shortly. Revenue earned from sale of books has risen appreciably. Basumati has also started producing Student Exercise Books. Significant progress has been achieved in digitizing the priceless classics printed by Basumati Sahitya Mandir since its inception.

State Ceremonies, other ceremonies and observance of birth & death anniversaries, Republic Day Celebration & Observance of Independence Day: Republic Day was celebrated and Independence Day was observed in a befitting manner at Red Road, Kolkata. Thousands of spectators witnessed the occasion. Apart from Kolkata, Independence Day was observed and Republic Day was celebrated in a befitting manner across the state. The department also observes the annual International Mother Language Day, Hool Divas, the birth and death anniversaries of Rabindranath Tagore, the birth anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Kazi Nazrul Islam all over the state and of Nepali poet Bhanu Bhakt in Darjeeling in befitting manners. The department also pays tributes to eminent personalities hailing from state every year.

Academies and other bodies

There is a large number of Academies set up by the state government, with specific mandates, such as Kamtapuri Bhasha Academy, Manbhum Cultural Academy, Baul Academy, Paschimbanga Natya Academy, Paschimbanga Kazi Nazrul Islam Academy, Paschimbanga Kabita Academy, West Bengal State Music Academy, Paschimbanga Bangla Academy, Sishu Kishore Academy, Minerva Natya Sanskriti Charcha Kendra, Rajya Charukala Parshad, Paschimbanga Jatra Academy, Folk and Tribal Cultural Centre, Rajbanshi Bhasha Academy, West Bengal Tele Academy and Birsa Munda Academy.

Awards

The government in its I&CA department has instituted several awards to recognize the eminent personalities who have contributed to the state's glory in the field of art and culture. Those include the Mahanayak Sammanana, Sharad Samman, Sangeet Mahasamman & Sangeet Samman, Tele Awards and Shilpi Mahasamman & Shilpi Samman. Apart from these, there are other annual awards such as Rabindra Puraskar (three categories), Nazrul Puraskar, Bankim Puraskar, Vidyasagar Puraskar (two categories), Girish Puraskar, Dinabandhu Puraskar, Abanindra Puraskar, Ramkinkar Baij Puraskar, Binod Behari Mukhopadhyay Puraskar, Allauddin Puraskar, Uday Shankar Puraskar, Girija Shankar Puraskar, Gyan Prakash Ghosh Puraskar, Thakur Panchanan Barma Puraskar, Pandit Raghunath Murmu Puraskar, Sudhi Pradhan Puraskar, Lalan Puraskar and Bina Dasgupta Puraskar.

Fairs and Festivals

The fairs and festivals organised by the state I&CA department includes Kolkata International Film Festival, Bangla Sangeet Mela, Biswa Bangla Lok Sanskriti Utsav, and Poush Utsav. Latest addition in the list are the grand Durga Idol Immersion Carnival on the Red Road, Kolkata, and the Ekatai Sampriti Utsav organized to spread the message of unity and communal harmony in different parts of the state.

Restoration & Conservation of State Protected Monuments & Heritage Buildings

The I&CA department has undertaken several conservation and restoration projects throughout the state, including Kanakeswar Shiva Temple at Arambag, Hooghly; Sribati Shiva Temple Katwa, Burdwan; Raghabeswar Shiva Temple, Dignagar, Nadia; Rajrajeswar Shiva Temple Dwarhatta, Haripal, Hooghly; Shyamchand Temple, Santipur, Nadia; Old Governor's House at Barrackpore, 24-Pgs(North); and the Duff College in Kolkata. The following restoration and conservation projects are in the pipeline: Harirampur Shiva Temple, Jangipara, Hooghly; Wooden mast at Bandel Church, Hooghly; Badshahi Mosque, Natun Hat, Mangalkot, Burdwan; Durga Temple Complex, Para, Raghunathpur, Purulia; and Nabaratna Temple, Brahmandihi, Nanoor, Birbhum.

Besides, there is another autonomous body under the department, the Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India, which conducts different research works in the field of archaeology and related matters.

Declassification of Netaji files

The first ever bold step forward

"The people of the country want to know what exactly happened to our national hero post-1945. There is a version, which only a section believes. The union government should now make a time-bound inquiry to throw light on the last days of his life. It's a shame that this part of our national history, which did in all certainty have bearing on international politics too, still remains shrouded in mystery. The truth must be unearthed."

Well, no prize for guessing which national hero Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was referring to. She uttered these words at a state government function on January 23, 2018, the 121st birth anniversary of that national hero, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

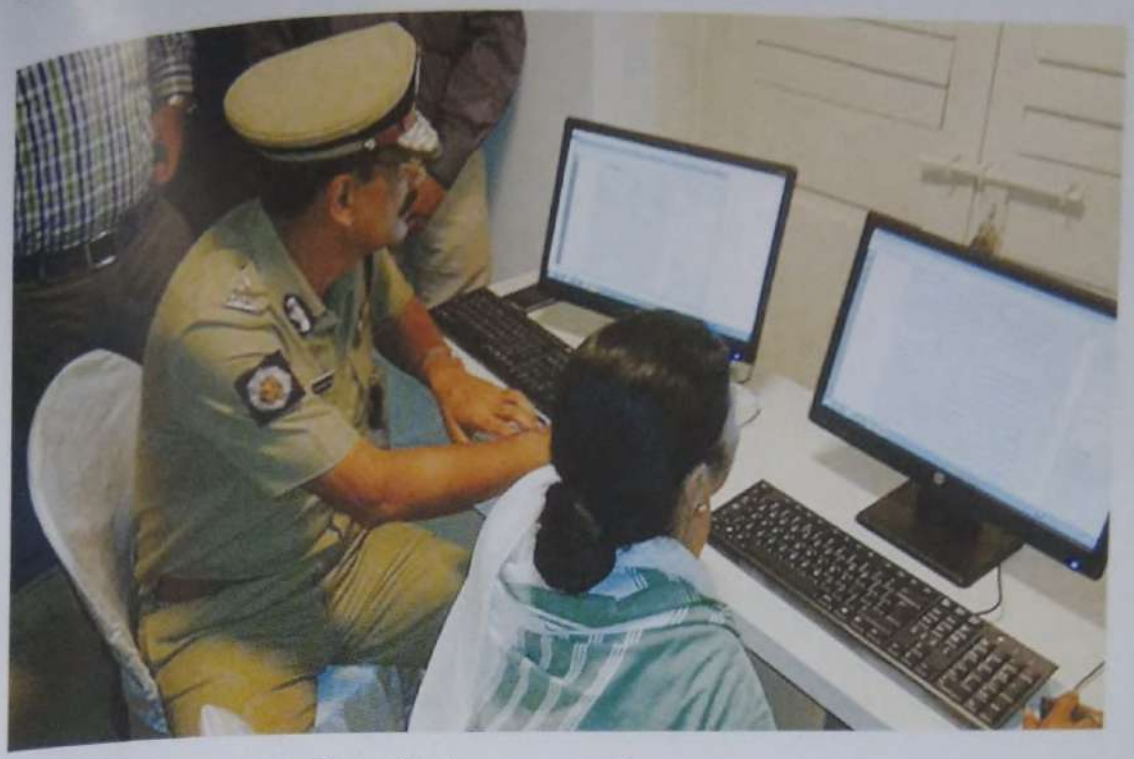
But everybody knows, be it in politics or in administration, she has ever been a staunch non-believer in lip service. She always does her bit first and then talk.

Now what did she do in this regard?

Flashback. Cut to September 2015. In by far the most significant step in unraveling the mystery behind Netaji's disappearance, the Government of West Bengal, as per her bold and historic decision, made 64 confidential files relating to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose public, ending years of wait for declassification of information on the national icon.

"We want people to know about what happened to Netaji. He is our national icon. What the Centre will do is their matter. For our part, we have decided to declassify all files that are in possession of the Kolkata police and the West Bengal police and place those in public domain," she said on September 12, 2015.





She was talking about the files surfaced during a search by the state Chief secretary and Home Secretary earlier that year. The status report of the Justice Mukherjee Commission had also referred to those files.

The first batch of files were from the year 1937 to 1947, and there were several files also from 1948 to 1968, including intelligence reports on surveillance over Netaji's kin.

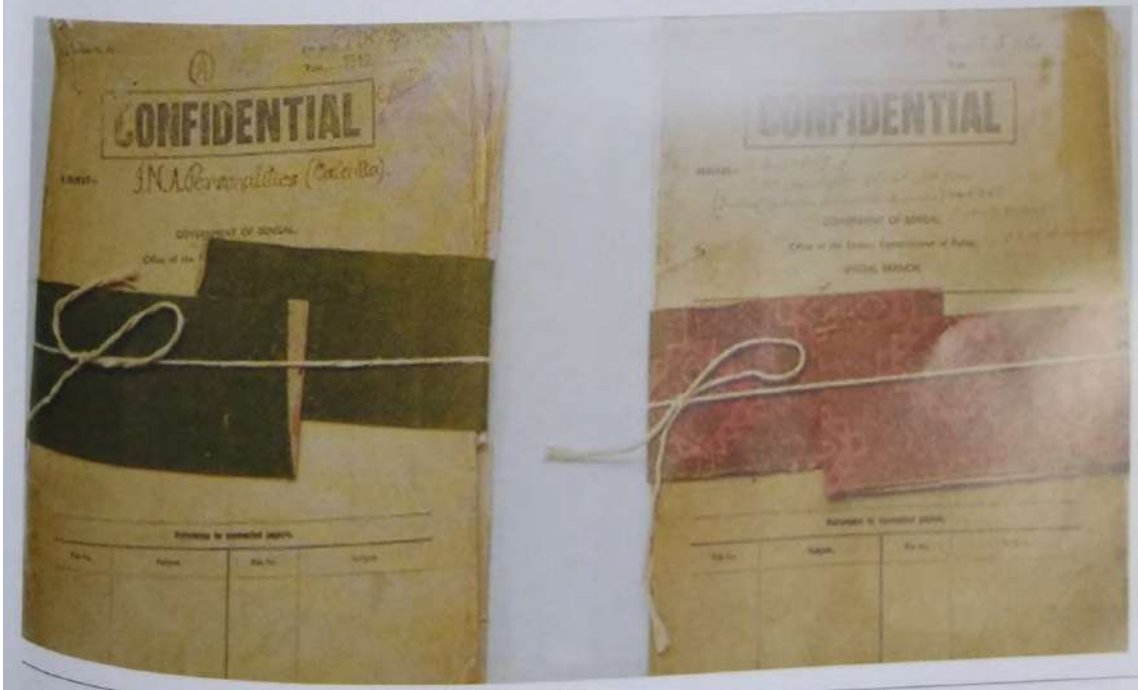
In a function on September 18 at the Kolkata Police Museum, the state government declassified 64 such files. A set of eight DVDs with over 12,000 pages of content was also released at the function that was attended by Netaji's family members.

The files displayed in glass cases at the museum, were made accessible to the public from September 21.

At the function, the then Police Commissioner of Kolkata handed over a DVD containing the files to the family members of Netaji who welcomed its release.

The Chief Minister, who visited the Kolkata Police Museum, described the "declassification of the closely guarded files on the country's legendary nationalist leader" as "historic".

Observing that the mystery about Netaji's disappearance had not been resolved even





In 70 years, she said, "We did not know what happened to Netaji. It is unfortunate. How long you can keep it under secrecy! You read the files in details."

Stating that her government wanted to maintain transparency and accountability, she said, "We don't feel that there is anything related to internal security in the files."

The Chief Minister urged the union government to declassify all files on Netaji in their possession.

"If they have nothing to hide, why aren't they declassifying the files? We want to know the truth. We have the right to know the truth," she said.

Pointing out that the union government has been rejecting the demand for declassifying the Netaji files on grounds that such a move would affect bilateral relations with some countries, the Chief Minister termed it as "a mere excuse" and said that if Delhi sincerely desired, it could resolve any bilateral issue with any country.

"Why would relations with other countries be spoiled if we honoured our great icons who fought for our freedom?" She wondered.



The members of the Bose family present at the function burst into rounds of applause when the Chief Minister demanded the declassification of the 130 files on Netaji that are in the custody of the union government.

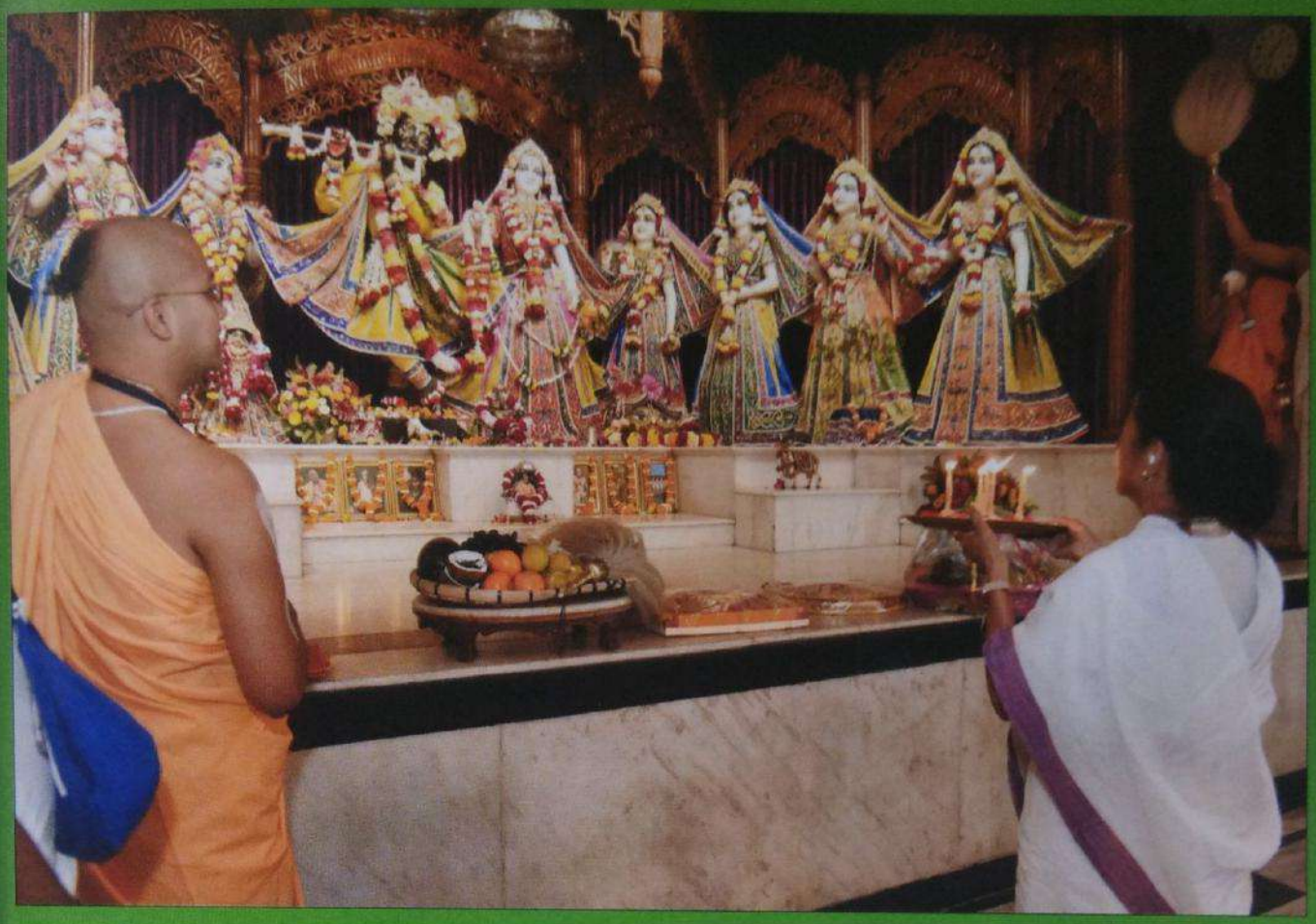
Commenting on the declassified state files on Netaji, the Chief Minister said, "As far as I could hurriedly leaf through, there are reasons to believe that Netaji might have remained alive long after 1945, a possibility that makes these files and also the ones in the union government's custody further intriguing."

Following the declassification of the Netaji files, the state government on September 28 did also make public the files of the Cabinet meetings held between 1938 and 1942, a crucial phase before Independence.

Soon after the declassification of the Netaji files, she made a tour to the national capital and handed over copies of the CD containing those declassified Netaji files to the President of India, the Prime Minister, the Union Home Minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman.

Point to be noted here that it's under pressure of such bold measures of hers, the union government did ultimately budge and declassified some of the Netaji files in their custody on his following birth anniversary, the 23rd of January 2016.

Yet the final lid on the grand mystery is still not undone by the union government, and hence the Chief Minister's lamentations a couple of years later. That, although, does not however undermine the significance of the matter that the first decisive steps have indeed been taken by the state where Netaji started his mission for liberating the country from British rule.



Top: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at ISKCON Temple at Mayapur in Nadia on February 12, 2018

Bottom: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the Mazaar of Chand Kazi on the same day



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurating KMDA's Garden Reach flyover on May 9, 2018



