



Government of West Bengal

Budget Statement

by

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**Minister of State (Independent Charge)
Finance Department**

2024-2025

8th February, 2024

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

With your permission, I rise to present the Annual Financial Statement for the financial year 2024-25 to this August House.

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Our visionary Hon'ble Chief Minister has consistently spearheaded for an inclusive, responsive and accountable governance and our Chief Minister believes that welfare of the people has to be center to all policies and programmes

With stupendous success in reaching out to more than **11 crore** people in **8 rounds** of Duare Sarkar and Paray Samadhan campaign and providing services to more than **8 crore**, our Chief Minister felt the need to reach out to every individual and cover the last mile and launched Samasya Samadhan-Jan Sanjog campaign from 20th January 2024. These universal service delivery to people is the driving force of our government.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

We have consistently focused on sound economic planning and financial discipline and have steadily moved on a path of **positive growth**. The size of the West Bengal economy, measured in terms of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices, has expanded by nearly four times, from **Rs. 4,60,959 crore** in **2010-11** to **Rs. 17,00,939 crore** in **2023-24** (1st AE).

An evaluation of the pace of growth in West Bengal economy as well as the strength and stability of macroeconomic indicators show that West Bengal has grown above the national average in the current financial year.

The industry sector has contributed significantly in our growth story. In the current financial year, the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) of the Manufacturing Sector in West Bengal is estimated to grow by **7.26 per cent**, much higher than the national average of **6.53 per cent**.

We have followed focused approach on **employment generation**. In this context, I like to mention that the national unemployment rate for the 3rd quarter of this fiscal (Oct-Dec 23) as per CMIE was **9.05%** whereas the Unemployment Rate (UR) in our State during the same period was less by **3% less**. This is attributed to our clear focus on job-intensive sectors including the most vibrant MSME sector.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

The interim budget placed by the Union Finance Minister on 1st February 2024 shows the bankruptcy of vision of the Central Government to address the most important concerns of the common people-inflation and jobs. There is nothing to address the challenges of rising food prices which hits the poorest the most.

In a glaring anti-people budget, **food subsidy** has been **cut by 3.3%** while **fertilizer subsidy** has been **cut by 13%** over last year's revised allocation, which will adversely affect the common people. Reducing the budget allocation under Assistance to States Agencies for movement of foodgrains by nearly **17%** shows the anti-poor policy of the government. These measures will only result in even higher food prices highlighting the gross neglect of the vast majority of the country.

It is shocking that funds for Urban Rejuvenation Mission but been cut by **21%**, reflecting the misplaced priorities of the Central Government.

Surprisingly, the extension of Ayushman Bharat Scheme for ASHA and ICDS workers in this year's budget of the Central Government has come very late in the day.

Under the guidance and inspiration of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, our State has already provided Swasthya Sathi coverage to all ASHA and ICDS workers since 2017.

That's why we say, what our Hon'ble Chief Minister thinks today, rest of India thinks tomorrow.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

While there was an understandable slowdown of revenues during and early post Covid period, by all-out effort of the Government, our States' own revenues have

rebounded and is now showing a steady growth since last few years. **State Revenue till date has grown by 10% over last FY.**

I would like to inform the august house that in the Budget of 2023-2024, we had introduced **Settlement of Disputes (SoD) Scheme in Commercial Taxes** for settling old disputed cases relating to Entry Tax, Value Added Tax etc.

The Hon'ble members will be happy to note that our attractive Settlement of Disputes Scheme was a grand success and we could garner more than **Rs. 900 crore** as additional revenue by settling **20,738 cases.**

While all out efforts are being made by the State Government to augment state's own resources, GST continues to remain a challenge with galloping instances of **GST frauds** even after six and half years of its implementation. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on July 31st, 2023, Union Finance Minister herself stated that during the period from 2020-21 till May 2023, a total **Rs. 2,68,537 crore** was defrauded in 43, 516 cases. In fact, this horrendous quantum of fraud in GST administration is depriving the States of their legitimate revenues.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

Hon'ble Members are surely aware of the consistent stellar performance in various programmes and schemes, and receiving awards and accolades both at the national and international levels. But I am very anguished to inform this august house that inspite of these, **the Central Government continues to deny our rights** in a federal polity by depriving our citizens from their entitlements. Under very important rural development programmes viz. **MGNREGA, Prime Minister Awas Yojna** and **Prime Minister Grameen Sadak Yojna**, and also under other important development programmes **like National Health Mission, XVth Finance Commission, Food Subsidy** the Central Government has immorally withheld our due money.

In total, the State has a due of Rs. 1 lakh 18 thousand crore from the Central Government.

Such unprecedented and grossly prejudicial attitude of the Central Government has crossed all limits.

The Central Government stopped flow of our rightful funds under MGNREGA and deprived our people from their source of livelihood. Our Government of Ma-Mati-Manush committed to stand by the side of the marginalized people. We have within our limited resources created

11 crore man-days for **43 lakh job-card holders** in the last year. In the current financial year, **28 crore man-days** for **64 lakh job-card holders** have been created.

Till date, the State from its own resources has created **39 crore man-days** of work with an **expenditure of Rs. 8,300 crore**.

The Hon'ble Members are aware that under the guidance of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, we started 'Pathashree-I' Project in 2022. Under this project we completed construction or repair of existing roads of length **14,416 km** at an expense of **Rs. 3,147 crore**. After this, under 'Pathashree-II' Project that started in 2023, we have completed work of **12,071 km** of roads at a cost of **Rs. 3,301 crore**. We are committed to continue with this project for further improving the rural connectivity.

I want to assure this house and the people of the State that, whatever be the financial blockade the Central Government imposes or whatever hurdles may come our way, we shall overcome all adversities with our head held high, and under the inspiring leadership of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, we shall continue to stand by our people with greater zeal and enthusiasm.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

Now I would like to highlight some of the people centric achievements of the State.

The empowerment of women has been turned into a mission since this government took office in 2011. While in 2010-11, the total number of functional credit linked SHGs in the State were 93,425, sustained supervision and monitoring by the government we have now achieved **more than 7 lakh** credit linked SHGs, which **makes West Bengal one of the top states** in the country in terms of credit linked SHGs.

Through the relentless coordinated efforts of the State Government disbursement of credit to SHGs has shot up from a mere Rs. 553 crore in 2010-11 to **Rs. 16,222 crore** in the current fiscal. This is more than 29 times increase in credit outflow to SHGs.

In this context I am happy to inform the august house that **16 lakh** of our SHGs are already **earning more than Rs. 1 lakh annually** and in the coming year **another 22 lakh SHGs** is expected to cross the annual income of Rs. 1 lakh.

Government of West Bengal has been at the forefront of ensuring wellbeing of its **women and children** through various schemes like - **Lakshmir Bhandar, Rupashree Prakalpa, Kanyashree Prakalpa, Old-Age pension, Widow and Disability pension** schemes, and others.

Recently additional **13 lakh** applications for **Lakshmir**

Bhandar, 9 lakh for Old Age Pension and **1.04 lakh for Widow Pension** were received in Duare Sarkar and through Sarasori Mukhyamantri campaign.

Thus, the total coverage has reached **2.11 crore in Lakshmir Bhandar, 28.44 lakh for Old Age Pension** and 20.23 lakh for Widow Pension. At the same time, the State Government has also introduced numerous schemes for health, nutrition, safety and education **of children like Aikyashree, Shikshashree, Medhashree and Sabooj Sathi.**

We spend around **44% of the State** development budget (SDS) for empowerment of women and ensuring gender equality and around **17% of State** development budget (SDS) is being incurred for the overall welfare of children.

Consistent with this commitment, Government of West Bengal has decided to introduce **‘Gender and Child Budget Statement’** which is a new Budget Publication in the budget for 2024-25.

The State Government has taken significant steps to implement a more effective Gender Empowerment and Social Inclusion framework with assistance from the World Bank. The **Women Employment Platform (WEP)** being implemented under this project is an inter-departmental body.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

As fulfilment of our commitment made in last budget, policy has been formulated for providing land rights to the tea garden workers. Till date, following the resumption of more than 2,500 (Two Thousand Five Hundred) acre area of unutilized/surplus land of the tea gardens, homestead pattas up to **5 decimals** have been granted to **around 23,000** (Twenty-Three Thousand) tea garden workers. The tea garden workers are being provided financial assistance of **Rs. 1.20 lakh** each for construction of their dwelling houses under **Cha-Sundari Extension Scheme**.

So far, under the ongoing Cha-Sundari Scheme, construction of **4,022 single** storied dwelling units in 17 sites in Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri districts have been approved and construction of 1,171 single storied dwelling units have been completed. This landmark initiative will undoubtedly be a significant step towards empowering the tea garden workers, alleviating their sufferings and elevating their standard of living.

In order to ensure welfare for migrant workers working outside the State and outside the Country and to secure for them benefits that would lead to improved living conditions, the State Government rolled out West Bengal

Migrant Workers' Welfare Scheme, 2023. During the State-wide mobilization drives in Duare Sarkar Camps, about **28 lakh migrant workers** have so far been registered through the **Karmasathi Parijayee Shramik Portal**.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

Please allow me now to touch upon the job providing sector.

The bouncing back of economy after COVID-19 pandemic was a great challenge. Relentless effort of the State Government has helped bolster both manufacturing and service segments under MSME. When this government took office in 2011, the annual credit disbursement to the MSME units by the Banks stood at Rs. 7,236 crore. You will be happy to know that due to various proactive engagements of the government the lending to MSMEs has risen to **Rs. 1.27 lakh crore in the FY 2022-23**. This is **17 times increase** in disbursement of credit to MSME in the state over a period of 12 years. We expect that this year in FY 23-24 the disbursement of **credit to MSME will reach Rs. 1.45 lakh crore**. With a view to ensuring continuity in desired pace of growth in MSME sector, Government had launched a new scheme - West Bengal Bhabishyat Credit Card Scheme (WBBCCS) with the objective of providing **self-employment to 2 lakh**

young entrepreneurs of the State per annum. The State Government has also taken a unique program called ‘Silper Samadhan’ to encourage MSME entrepreneurs in every village and block level of the State.

Recently, a slew of measures has been taken by the State Government to boost the export potential of the State, including the formulation of **West Bengal Export Promotion Policy 2023**. The policy aims to make Bengal the ‘**Global trading hub of India**’ by doubling the share of State in the country’s total annual exports over the next few years. An Export Facilitation Portal has also been launched for all exporters.

West Bengal Logistics Sector Development Policy 2023 has been also formulated to promote the booming logistics sector in the state. Taking advantage of the strategic geographical location of the state, the policy plans to make key interventions to promote efficient Logistics in West Bengal. The policy implementation will be supported by the World Bank.

Deocha- Pachami coal block has around 1,198 million tons of coal as indicated reserve (G3 level exploration), along with around 1,400 million cubic meter basalt / black stone. The exploratory drilling work in the area has been completed.

Six Industrial and Economic Corridors (IECs) are being developed to act as the lifeline for investment and jobs. The alignment of these IECs include—

- Dankuni—Kharagpur—Raghunathpur;
- Kalyani—Dankuni;
- Dankuni—Tajpur;
- Panagarh-Cooch Behar;
- Kharagpur—Murshidabad; and
- Gurudi in Purulia—Joka along Varanasi—Kolkata National Highway.

The IECs will be developed with the support and technical assistance from **Asian Development Bank** (ADB). This initiative is expected to attract huge investments and create lakh of job opportunities.

Sir, **Durga Puja Festival** has been recognized as an intangible cultural heritage by **UNESCO**. This festival bestows economic prosperity creating **large number of employments**. We have recently set up world class **Convention Centres at Kolkata and Digha** which have become vibrant centres for business, trade and **MICE** (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) **tourism**.

Our State is now uniquely placed as an important industrial and tourism destination. This will open new avenues of investment and also generate lakh of employment opportunities for our youth.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir, few years before we came to this office, **poverty level** in our **State was 57.60%**. I am happy to inform this august house that with our all-out concerted efforts during our term in office, **more than 2 crore people** have been provided with employment. Due to this, the poverty level has declined **precipitously to 8.60%** resulting into a **reduction of 49%**.

As a result, more than **1 crore 72 lakh** people have **come out of poverty** (NITI Aayog).

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

Under the able leadership and guidance of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, a large number of projects and programmes have been undertaken by various departments and parastals of the Government. The highlights of the achievements are given in Part 3 of this speech.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir, I would now like to place the proposed allocation of the major departments and Part 2 & 3 of the Speech may kindly be considered as read. With your permission, I will now directly go to Part-4 of my Speech at Page No. 153.

Budget Allocation (Net) in the Financial year 2024-25.

1. Agricultural Marketing

I propose to allocate Rs. 423.63 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

2. Agriculture

I propose to allocate Rs. 9,857.01 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

3. Animal Resources Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,241.69 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

4. Backward Classes Welfare

I propose to allocate Rs. 2,270.03 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

5. Consumer Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 133.73 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

6. Co-operation

I propose to allocate Rs. 653.92 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

7. Correctional Administration

I propose to allocate Rs. 389.21 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

8. Disaster Management & Civil Defence

I propose to allocate Rs. 2,263.13 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

9. Environment

I propose to allocate Rs. 103.86 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

10. Fire and Emergency Services

I propose to allocate Rs. 491.04 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

11. Fisheries

I propose to allocate Rs. 532.74 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

12. Food and Supplies

I propose to allocate Rs. 9,858.17 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

13. Food Processing Industries and Horticulture

I propose to allocate Rs. 246.51 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

14. Forests

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,015.81 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

15. Health & Family Welfare

I propose to allocate Rs. 19,851.73 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

16. Higher Education

I propose to allocate Rs. 6,401.11 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

17. Home & Hill Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 13,870.63 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

18. Housing

I propose to allocate Rs. 281.94 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

19. Industry, Commerce & Enterprises

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,463.75 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

20. Information & Cultural Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 980.85 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

21. Information Technology & Electronics

I propose to allocate Rs. 210.66 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

22. Irrigation and Waterways

I propose to allocate Rs. 4,074.43 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

23. Judicial

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,466.08 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

24. Labour

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,188.31 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

25. Land & Land Reforms and Refuge Relief & Rehabilitation

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,498.58 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

26. Law

I propose to allocate Rs. 20.54 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

27. Mass Education Extension and Library Services

I propose to allocate Rs. 404.10 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

28. Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Textiles

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,262.10 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

29. Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education

I propose to allocate Rs. 5,530.65 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

30. Non-conventional & Renewable Energy Sources

I propose to allocate Rs. 81.64 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

31. North Bengal Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 861.00 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

32. Panchayats & Rural Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 29,602.42 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

33. Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 752.28 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

34. Personnel & Administrative Reforms

I propose to allocate Rs. 411.79 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

35. Planning and Statistics

I propose to allocate Rs. 607.42 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

36. Power

I propose to allocate Rs. 3,723.16 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

37. Public Enterprises & Industrial Reconstruction

I propose to allocate Rs. 76.20 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

38. Public Health Engineering (PHE)

I propose to allocate Rs. 4,576.87 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

39. Public Works (PWD)

I propose to allocate Rs. 6,776.34 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

40. School Education

I propose to allocate Rs. 38,241.66 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

41 . Science and Technology and Biotechnology

I propose to allocate Rs. 79.12 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

42. Self Help Group & Self Employment

I propose to allocate Rs. 791.11 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

43. Sunderban Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 626.94 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

44. Technical Education, Training and Skill Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,377.88 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

45. Tourism

I propose to allocate Rs. 519.92 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

46. Transport

I propose to allocate Rs. 2,187.99 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

47. Tribal Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,203.82 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

48. Urban Development and Municipal Affairs

I propose to allocate Rs. 13,341.98 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

49. Water Resources Investigation & Development

I propose to allocate Rs. 1,597.66 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

50. Women and Child Development & Social Welfare

I propose to allocate Rs. 26,590.45 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

51. Youth Services and Sports

I propose to allocate Rs. 833.34 crore to this department in the year 2024-25.

Achievements of Major Departments

Agriculture and Rural Economy

3.1 Agriculture

Agriculture continues to be the predominant economic activity in the State. The State has progressed remarkably in the field of Agriculture during the last twelve years with focus on productivity, research, innovation, capacity building and welfare of farmers.

During the period, production of Maize has increased by seven times, production of Pulses by three times and production of Oilseeds by two times. Also total foodgrain production increased to about 57 lakh million tonnes during the last thirteen years. West Bengal is the largest producer of Paddy, Jute and Mesta and the second largest producer of Potato in India.

Under the scheme 'Krishak Bandhu' during 2023-24, financial assistance has been provided to more than 101 lakh farmers amounting to Rs. 2,762.94 crore in Kharif and Rs. 2,772 crore is disbursed to more than 101 lakh farmers in Rabi. More than 41 lakh new farmer beneficiaries have been added under Krishak Bandhu (Natun) Scheme through eight rounds of 'Duare Sarkar'. Since inception of the Scheme in 2019, more than Rs. 18,147 crore has been disbursed.

Under 'Krishak Bandhu (Death Benefit)' Scheme one time financial assistance is given @ Rs. 2 lakh to the family members of the deceased farmers in the age group between 18 to 60 years. Rs. 554.26 crore has been disbursed to the family members of 27,713 deceased farmers during 2023-24. Since inception, more than Rs. 2,029 crore has been disbursed to legal heirs of 1,01,457 deceased farmers.

Under Farmers' 'Old Age Pension Scheme', 76,049 farmers are being benefited with pension amounting Rs. 1,000 per month under 'Jai Bangla' Scheme.

From Kharif Season 2019, the State Government has been implementing 'Bangla Shasya Bima (BSB) Scheme', a fully State Government funded scheme for crop insurance. Total 68 lakh farmers enrolled under the scheme during Rabi 2022-23 and 59.59 lakh farmers during Kharif 2023-24. During the financial year, 70 lakh farmers got claim settlement of Rs. 247 crore.

Under 'Bangla Krishi Sech Yojana (BKSY)' in association with Per Drop More Crop, in FY 2023-24, so far, an area of 12,861 hectares of agricultural land benefitting 30,215 farmers has been covered under Micro Irrigation by installation of both Sprinkler Irrigation System and Drip Irrigation System. Since inception, 1,71,928 farmers have been benefited by installation of Micro Irrigation system in their field with a coverage of 68,297 hectares area under this Scheme.

Under Hi-Tech Potato Seed Production Project, approximately 1,200 MT of high-yielding potato seeds have been distributed to the farmers. The seed produced under this Project marketed under the brand 'Bangashree', is in high demand.

For scaling up production in Hi-Tech Potato Seed, 'Apical Rooted Cuttings (ARC)' Technology has been initiated during 2023-24 and, so far, 3.5 lakh farmers have adopted it in 13 districts with the help of 57 project partners. It is estimated that this would provide 28 lakh mini-tubers and subsequently 105 MT G1 potato seed in 2024-25 and 630 MT G2 potato seed in 2025-26 which will help to enhance potato production.

State Government has taken several initiatives to increase the cultivation area of Maize from 2.64 lakh hectares to 3.62 lakh hectares, Pulses from 4.43 lakh hectares to 4.81 lakh hectares and Oilseeds from 9.26 lakh hectares to 10.02 lakh hectares during the last five years.

In the backdrop of 'International Year of Millets', 2023 and for popularizing and increasing area and production of Ragi Millet in West Bengal, a project for area expansion of 2,100 hectares of finger millet (Ragi) has been taken up in hill regions of Kalimpong, Darjeeling and in the Paschimanchal Districts.

A programme for increasing area under cultivation of Pulses by more than 75,000 hectares and that of Oilseeds by 92,500 hectares has been taken up, by utilizing the fallow land after harvesting of Kharif paddy under the scheme 'Targeting Rice Fallow Areas (TRFA)', special emphasis has also been given to increase the area to 3.72 lakh hectares of coarse cereals like Maize.

The State Government has given thrust on farm mechanization since 2012-13. During 2022-23, Rs. 59.54 crore was utilized towards distribution of subsidised farm machinery among 13,554 beneficiaries, and out of which Rs. 11.34 crore has been utilized through establishment of 77 no. of Custom Hiring Centres (CHC). So far in 2023-24, 17,149 beneficiaries received 21,417 farm machinery/implements. Another 132 CHCs are being set up.

A comprehensive programme has been taken up with production target of 2,300 MT of Mulberry Raw Silk, 28 MT of Tasar Silk, 1.5 Qtls. of Muga Silk and 6 MT of Eri Spun Yarn.

3.2 Agricultural Marketing

'Sufal Bangla' Project was introduced by the Government in 2014 for ensuring remunerative price to farmers for their agricultural produce and reasonable price to the consumers. It runs 484 Outlets and 7 Bulk Purchase

Hubs throughout the State and serves about 3.50 lakh consumers, integrating about 80,000 farmers and procuring daily about 100 MT of perishables. The Annual turnover of 'Sufal Bangla' is now Rs. 106 crore. So far, 77 new stores have been opened in this FY.

186 Krishak Bazars, sub-market yards are running successfully and providing excellent marketing infrastructure for aggregation and ease of marketing access for the rural farmers.

As a part of 'Ease of Doing Business' for agricultural business sector, online integrated electronic single platform permit (e-Permit) and 'Unified License System' has been introduced for fast transactions of agricultural produce. Through this system 10,47,639 e-Permits and 35,882 licenses have been generated.

In Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), a pan-India electronic trading portal for agricultural commodities, 18 markets from 15 districts have been integrated with 79,188 stakeholders transacting 63,240 MT of agricultural commodities for a value of Rs. 101.04 crore.

As on date, 1,003 Farmer Producers Organisation (FPOs) have been formed integrating more than 4 lakh farmers to whom different facilities and support are being provided for their agri-business development.

The State hosts one of the largest cold storage capacities in the country of more than 87 lakh MT with 620 cold storages. New investment of Rs. 239 crore is upcoming in cold storage sector this year with an employment opportunity of about 20,000.

As a part of Post Harvest Management, 3,905 low cost storage structures have been created for small and marginal farmers to arrest post harvest loss of their agricultural produces under 'Amar Fasal Amar Gola' scheme.

Organic Haat, an innovative project, for promotion and marketing of organic agricultural produces has been started at New Town, Rajarhat.

3.3 Food Security : Food & Supplies

Ensuring food security to the people of the State by providing good quality and adequate quantity of food grains to the eligible beneficiaries is the primary objective of the State Government.

'Khadyasathi' Programme provides free of cost food grains to about 9 crore beneficiaries of the State under 'National Food Security Act (AAY & PHH or SPHH)' and 'Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana' (RKSU-I & RKSU-II) through a vast network of about 20,400 Fair Price Shops and about 500 Distributors.

The State Government has taken up a special initiative to provide additional foodgrains over and above the existing entitlements as per category of their card under its Special Packages to about 50 lakh beneficiaries belonging to those living in difficult and remote/ interior areas viz. Jangal Mahal area, Vulnerable Tribal Group of Totopara, Hill areas of Darjeeling and Kalimpong district, Aila affected blocks, 'unwilling farmers of Singur', and all workers and non-workers residing in Tea Garden areas.

'Khadyasathi' beneficiaries are now provided foodgrains at their doorsteps through the 'Duare Ration' Scheme distributed through e-PoS after Aadhaar authentication. At present 97.74% individual ration cards have been seeded with Aadhaar. To address the issue of non-matching of fingerprint during e-KYC, IRIS scanner has been installed in the Office of the SCF & S.R.O., Inspector Food & Supplies and at all FPSs. At the time of ration distribution, the beneficiaries are authenticated through fingerprint scan, IRIS scan or OTP in Aadhaar linked mobile.

The severely acute malnourished (SAM) children are also being provided 5 Kg rice, 2.5 Kg wheat, 1 Kg Bengalgram and 1 Kg of Masur dal per month free of cost. During 2023-24, 5,175 numbers of SAM children have been provided foodgrains, so far.

Inmates of Government owned/sponsored hostels and welfare institutions are also being provided subsidized foodgrains @ 15 Kg rice per head per month. During FY 2023-24 10,940 MT foodgrains have been allocated under this Scheme.

To provide additional nutritional support to the beneficiaries of Khadyasathi, under Mid-Day Meal Scheme and ICDS, the State Government is now providing fortified rice in all the districts.

During 'Kharif Marketing Season' (KMS), 2023-24 the State Government has enhanced Minimum Support Price (MSP) from Rs. 2,040 to Rs. 2,183 per quintal. The State Government also provides an additional incentive at the rate of Rs. 20 per quintal to the farmers who sell their paddy at 'Centralised Procurement Centres (CPCs)' and mobile CPCs (m-CPCs). To provide opportunity to the farmers of sparsely located villages who face difficulty to sell the paddy, the Government has opened more mobile Paddy Purchase Centers and is organising additional camps by the Paddy Procuring Societies such as PACS, Sangha & Mahasangha of SHG, FPO or FPS, etc. In the current KMS 2023-24, 535 CPCs, 92 mobile CPCs, 312 FPO/FPCs, 1116 SHGs and 1080 PACS are engaged in paddy procurement operations.

For more transparency and convenience to the farmers in the KMS 2023-24, electronic Point of Purchase (e-POP)

machines integrated with fingerprint scanner and IRIS scanner are being used at all Paddy Procurement Centers. West Bengal has become one of the few States in the country to purchase paddy by authentication of the farmers through fingerprint or IRIS scan or OTP in Aadhaar linked mobile.

The farmers can know about the status of their registration, payment of MSP and also apply for registration or updating and schedule the date & time slot for selling their paddy as per their choice and convenience either themselves through the paddy procurement portal (<https://epaddy.wb.gov.in>) or from any purchase centre, 'Bangla Sahayata Kendra (BSK)', Food Inspector's Office, WhatsApp Chatbot (9903055505), 'Khadyasathi Annadatri' mobile app.

The State Government, in the last 12 years has created about 11.56 lakh MT storage capacity. 16 more godowns with a total capacity of 43,000 MT are under construction.

3.4 Food Processing Industries and Horticulture

West Bengal is one of the major producers of vegetables, fruits, spices, medicinal plants and flowers.

During the crop year 2022-2023, the State has recorded substantial increase in both area and production of horticultural crops, achieving coverage of 16,37,655 hectares

with the production of 2,07,13,742 MT of fruits, flowers, vegetables, spices and plantation crops.

For area expansion of major and minor fruits, a total of 93,23,791 high-quality saplings are being supplied to the farmers worth more than Rs. 29.81 crore.

The area of off-season Onion cultivation specially during the kharif and late kharif season is being expanded and 22 quintal of Onion seeds of the Variety of Agri-found Dark Red species have been distributed among the farmers. At the same time, farmers have been given assistance for the storage of 700 MT of Onion at field level by incentivizing cost of construction of Onion storage.

During the crop year, a total of 1,83,955 Sq. Meter of protected cultivation structure has been constructed for protected cultivation of high value flowers and vegetables to cope up with impact of Climate Change. At the same time, financial assistance has been given to the farmers for the cultivation of gerbera, orchids, rose, etc. and high-value vegetables respectively under protected structures.

Front line transfers of technologies for conservation of soil moisture through mulching have been conducted in 637.5 hectares of land.

‘Centre of Excellence for Vegetables’ at Chinsurah is currently serving as demonstration and training centre

as well as source of good quality planting material and vegetable seedlings under protected cultivation.

3.5 Animal Resources Development

According to publications by Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Government of India, during 2022-23, West Bengal has recorded the highest annual growth rate (20.1%) in egg production among all the States, and achieved the second highest annual growth rate in milk production in the country i.e. 8.65% compared to national average of 3.83%. The State has also become the second highest meat producer in India, accounting for nearly 12% of the meat produced in India.

Due to the State Government's recent initiatives, West Bengal is close to achieving its annual requirement of 1,440 crore eggs and becoming self-sufficient in Egg production. West Bengal has now become the fourth largest producer of poultry eggs, contributing 9.94% of the national production.

In the backyard poultry sector which employs mostly women and Self Help Groups, 58.81 lakh chicks and ducklings have been distributed up to December 2023 among 5,88,122 beneficiaries. While in 2021-22, 43.02 lakh chicks and ducklings were distributed, the target has more than tripled to 152 lakh in 2023-24.

In the private sector, 156 projects have been set up under 'West Bengal Incentive Scheme', 2017. Out of these, 106 units have started production, adding 158 crore eggs per year to the State's output. Subsidies and incentives disbursed to private poultry units are to the tune of Rs. 17.20 crore.

To encourage production of broiler chicks for meat production, and to generate rural self-employment, the West Bengal Incentive Scheme 2023 for Broiler Breeding Farms has been notified by the State Government recently, with an outlay of Rs. 30 crore over two years.

Under the Broiler Integration Programme, chicks, along with their feed, medicines, etc. are distributed to small farmers and are taken back 6 weeks later under a buy-back arrangement by the ARD Department. This programme has been expanded from 2 districts to 12 districts, opening up a major source of self-employment in rural areas. Under this innovative scheme, which links the farmer directly to the market, a farmer can be assured of a net income of approx. Rs. 1 lakh annually.

Under 'Duare Pashu Chikitsa', for door step delivery of Veterinary services to farmers, Mobile Veterinary Units and Clinics have started operation in all 344 Blocks of the State linked to a State-level Call Centre. 1,20,961 Animal Health Camps have been organized during January 2023 to December 2023.

In order to promote the Dairy Sector as a viable livelihood option and to boost income in the rural economy, the State Government has set up 'Banglar Dairy'. The Government owned Company is providing financial incentive (subsidy) @ Rs. 11.50 per litre of standard raw milk, directly to the bank accounts of primary dairy farmers through Milk Unions. 'Banglar Dairy' has procured 3,54,95,081 Kg milk from 1st January, 2023 to 31st December, 2023 for which Rs. 119 crore has been paid to dairy farmers through DBT.

Banglar Dairy's retail outlets have increased to 576, with average daily milk sales of 1.40 lakh litres, along with processed products Paneer, Yoghurt, Mishti Doi, Tok Doi, Ghee, Peda and Ice cream.

To inject an element of professionalism and to handhold farmers in goatery sector from start to end, 20 Farmer Producer Companies (FPC) and 400 Goatery Clusters have been set up in the last two years, directly benefitting 26,000 marginal rural families, which has resulted in more goat meat production besides generating self-employment opportunities in rural areas. Presently 3,440 Self Help Groups are being provided nearly 35,000 goats as livelihood inputs.

In Piggery, a new cluster approach has been taken up for providing live piglets along with insurance, medication and initial feed to families belonging to Scheduled Tribes

and Scheduled Castes for whom piggery is an economically important source of livelihood.

Higher milk yielding varieties of heifers have been distributed among individuals and members of milk societies.

47,900 fresh 'Kisan Credit Cards' have been issued in the last three years for Animal Husbandry. Up to 30th November 2023, Rs. 393 crore have been sanctioned to mostly marginal animal rearers in rural areas.

For breed upgradation, over 5.5 crore bovine artificial inseminations have been performed resulting in 1.82 crore calves born since 2010-11. 6.39 crore doses of vaccination have been administered during January 2023 to December 2023, benefitting 169.76 lakh farmers.

The number of retail sale points of Haringhata Meat has been increased to 796. WBLDC also started export of goat and sheep meat.

3.6 Fisheries

As on 31.12.2023, in FY 2023-24, 16.80 lakh MT of fish and 22,265 million fish seeds have been produced in West Bengal. Fish production has registered an increase of almost 11% over the production during the corresponding period in 2022-23.

Brackish water species account for more than 70% of export of fish from West Bengal (both in terms of quantity

and value) and therefore, for boosting production in this sector, 'Monoculture of Tiger Shrimp' in 109 units (Rs. 45.64 lakh), and 'Monoculture of Vennamei Shrimp' in 170 units (Rs. 60.79 lakh) are being undertaken.

For augmenting fish production in inland freshwater sector, large number of ponds have been excavated under 'Jal Dharo-Jal Bharo' scheme. So far, various inputs have been released in 13,148 such ponds (1,753.07 hectares) for scientific pisciculture.

As part of air-breathing fish culture, scheme for nurturing of 'Deshi Magur / Singhi' in 580 ponds with fund involvement of Rs. 2.10 crore is being implemented.

A flagship programme named 'Banga Matsya Yojona' is being implemented for augmentation of production and development of infrastructure with a view to raising standard of living of the fisher folk. In this programme, 27 different types of schemes/projects have been approved covering 424 beneficiaries (under Beneficiary Oriented Schemes) with total fund involvement of Rs. 55.97 crore.

For exploring untapped potential of unutilized beels, baors, etc. and increasing productivity of big water bodies, another flagship programme namely, Fish Culture in cages at Kangsabati Reservoir is being implemented on pilot basis with the technical help of ICAR-CIFRI and fund

involvement of Rs. 107.12 lakh. Till date the quantum of Fish Production is about 50 MT.

To develop 'Nayachar Fishery Hub' in Purba Medinipur, efforts have been made for undertaking different infrastructural works for improved and advanced pisciculture activities. 101 new PFCS Ltd., have been formed with 2,957 fishermen for bringing available water bodies in the area under scientific pisciculture.

925 units of Net and Hundies, 266 units of Drag Nets and 120 units of Behundi Nets have been distributed to individual fishermen (inland), Cooperative Societies (inland) and individual fishermen (marine) respectively with total fund involvement of Rs. 2.06 crore.

442 Dwelling Houses (@ Rs. 1.00 lakh per unit) have been provided to the tribal fishermen and Rs. 3.3 crore has been released for this purpose till 31.12.2023.

Quota of 'Old Age Pension' in Fisheries Sector has been enhanced to 20,000 and pension @ Rs. 1,000 per month is being disbursed to the pensioners every month.

3.7 Panchayat & Rural Development

In spite of all statutory compliances by the State, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has not yet released funds under major rural development schemes viz. MGNREGA, PMAY and PMGSY.

Labour Budget under MGNREGA for the Financial Year 2023-24 is yet to be sanctioned. Accordingly, no work has been executed in the current Financial Year except fixed administrative expenditure towards salary and contingency expenses amounting to Rs. 138.36 crore.

In 2023-24, under 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana' only 29,040 beneficiaries have received either of any installment and till date total 9,493 houses have been completed.

Under Phase I and II of 'Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana', 36,786 km roads and 55 long span bridges have been sanctioned involving more than Rs. 18,403 crore, out of which 36,526 km of road and 53 long span bridges have been completed upto 31.12.2023 and rest will be completed by this FY. State has received clearance of 144 road projects having length 857.25 km involving fund amounting to Rs. 584.88 crore under PMGSY-III, Batch-I in the FY 2022-23, out of which Central Share is Rs. 343.16 crore & State Share is Rs. 241.72 crore. These works are in progress. Proposal for PMGSY-III, Batch-I for 2023-24 is awaited for sanction.

All the Gram Panchayats of West Bengal have been declared as Open Defecation Free (ODF) in the year 2021 and now the State Government and District Authorities have been working in a sustained manner for maintaining

ODF Status and achieving a clean environment in rural Bengal. During this FY (up to Dec'23) 150,069 Individual Household Latrines and 884 Community Sanitary Complexes have been constructed.

19,54,545 beneficiaries are getting pension under 'National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)'.

The State Government has brought all the existing pension schemes under one umbrella scheme namely 'Jai Bangla Scheme, 2020' and the monthly pension has been increased to a uniform rate of Rs. 1,000 per month w.e.f. 01.04.2020.

Authenticated Aadhaar details of 96% beneficiaries are already entered in the NSAP-PPS portal. All the beneficiaries are getting pension through Direct Benefit Transfer Process (DBT) and presently 68% of the total pensioners are getting pension through Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS). Persons aged 60 years or above, belonging to SECC 2011 (deprivation criteria up to level at least 3), are provided the benefit @ Rs. 1,000 per month under 'Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)'. Presently 11,71,673 beneficiaries are getting assistance under this Scheme.

Widowed women aged between 40 to 79, belonging to SECC 2011 (deprivation criteria upto level at least 2), are provided the benefit @ Rs. 1,000 per month under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension (IGNWPS). Presently

7,26,172 beneficiaries are getting assistance under this Scheme.

Persons with disabilities, aged between 18 to 79 years, living below the poverty line with 80 per cent disability or 40 per cent disability in each case of having multiple disabilities are provided the benefit @ Rs. 1,000 per month to each beneficiary. Presently 56,700 beneficiaries are getting assistance under this Scheme.

One time assistance of Rs. 40,000 is given to the eligible family member of the deceased bread winner within age group of 18-60 belonging to BPL family under 'National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)'. In FY 2023-24 total 20,761 families have already been benefited through 'National Family Benefit Scheme'.

Under 'West Bengal State Rural Livelihood Mission (WBSRLM)' 11.80 lakh SHGs have been formed with the involvement of 1.2 crore women folks under the fold of NRLM (as on December'2023). Apart from these, 40,178 Upasanghas and 3,339 Sanghas, 296 Block level Maha-Sanghas have also been constituted. All the 3,338 Sanghas are now registered as Multipurpose Primary Cooperative Societies under the 'West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act, 1961' and these Sangha Cooperatives are doing business activities on their own.

At present, 6,45,960 SHGs have received Revolving Fund amounting to Rs. 968.94 crore and 2,71,152 SHGs have been provided with 'Community Investment Fund (CIF)', amounting to Rs. 2,901.63 crore under NRLM and upto December' 2023, bank loans have been disbursed to 6,65,034 SHGs aggregating to Rs. 13,945.96 crore.

In 2023-24, 1.16 crore students of 83,039 Schools and Madrasahs have been provided with 2 sets of school uniforms through 51,900 Self Help Groups in convergence with six Departments of the State Government. 312 Self Help Group institutions have been tagged with 312 ICDS projects for supply of food materials and 50 Khadya Chaya units (SHG canteen & cafeterias) have been established at different tourist locations.

For the promotion of Non-farm livelihoods under the umbrella of WBSRLM, 16 District 'Srishtishree' outlets (Outlets for promotion and sales of SHG products) have been developed and these outlets have already been made functional. 18,943 enterprises have been provided growth-oriented enterprise support under 'Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)' and 'One Stop Facilitation Centre (OSF)'. 150 enterprises with turnover range (Rs. 12 lakh and above) are getting incubated through Indian Institute of Management–Calcutta Innovation Park (IIM-CIP) for further business growth.

3.8 Irrigation & Waterways

An additional area of 60,631 acre of cultivable land has been brought under irrigation during 2023-24 by completing construction of some check dams in Bankura and Purulia districts and renovation of medium and minor irrigation schemes in South Bengal and partially completing the renovation of Canal system of four major irrigation projects, namely Kangsabati Reservoir Project, Mayurakshi Reservoir Project, Teesta Barrage Project and DVC Canal system.

In spite of deficient rainfall in the early part of the monsoon, sowing of paddy in the command area of the major irrigation projects could be possible and supplementary Kharif Irrigation was provided at 21.20 lakh acre of cultivable area. Moreover, sufficient water has been stored at the reservoirs to provide irrigation at 4.71 lakh acre of area in the ensuing Rabi-Boro season, through effective synchronization of reservoir operation in consultation with DVC (Damodar Valley Corporation) and CWC (Central Water Commission).

During occasional high tides in Sundarban areas, any major damages were averted due to disaster preparedness taken by the Department in consultation with State Disaster Management Department and District Administration. Due to breach of Chungthang Dam in

Sikkim in the 1st week of October 2023 resulting in sudden increase of discharge of River Teesta in West Bengal, some damages to embankments occurred in Jalpaiguri District. Emergent restoration of 304 km of damaged embankments and 774 structures were carried out. As a result, further inundation was avoided.

During 2023-24, 236 km of flood and river eroding embankments have been improved and 392 km of drainage channels have been excavated. Like previous year, upkeep and maintenance of around 1,110 km of drainage channels through annual maintenance contracts and one time clearance of 643 km of drainage channels were carried out during the monsoon of 2023 which also help in controlling vector borne diseases. It is important to note that anti-erosion work along Ganga-Padma River for a length of 12.74 km in Malda and Murshidabad Districts, has been taken up in 2023.

As a result of dredging of Muriganga River in between Kakdwip and Sagar Island, planned through scientific model study with the help of renowned experts, uninterrupted water transshipment could be achieved for almost 24 hours during the Ganga Sagar Mela.

During last one year, under World Bank assisted 'West Bengal Major Irrigation and Flood Management Project' raising and strengthening of 75 km of embankment,

dredging of river & drainage channel for a length of 108 km and improvement of irrigation canal for 640 km have been completed. The project will be completed in December 2025. Total expenditure under this project since inception, up to 31st Dec. 2023 is Rs. 2,295 crore.

A special endeavor has been taken up for formulation of a comprehensive flood management and erosion abatement scheme of Ganga/Padma River in Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia districts through advanced survey, analysis of satellite imageries. Total 33 permanent bridges, over drainage channels and irrigation canals, have been constructed in 2023-24 apart from renovation of 20 of wooden bridges.

3.9 Water Resources Investigation & Development

The Department has been playing a significant role for enhancing the irrigation potential for minor irrigation and subsequent increase in agriculture production. Irrigation potential of about 38,000 hectares has planned to be created through various Minor Irrigation Projects under different Programmes. Total 1,423 Minor Irrigation schemes with irrigation potential of 30,514 hectares have already been completed up to 31.12.2023.

Under 'Jal Dharo-Jal Bharo' during 2023-24, 8,330 water bodies/water detention structures have been created/renovated out of which 8,060 equivalent standard tanks

by WRI&D Department and 270 water bodies have been created/renovated in convergence with P&RD Department up to 31.12.2023.

Since 2011-12, till 31.12.2023, 4,04,978 water bodies/ water detention structures have been created/renovated out of which 1,21,574 equivalent standard tanks by WRI&D Department and 2,83,404 water bodies have been created/renovated in convergence with P&RD Department.

During 2023-24, under Matir Shristi, 89 new sites taken up under Phase-III covering about 8,588 acre and 156 irrigation infrastructure schemes have been completed creating irrigation potential of 1,409 hectares by WRI&D Department alone under Matir Shristi Programme.

Under 'Jalathirtha' Programme for increasing irrigation coverage and rain water conservation in the seven arid Districts of Paschimanchal in saline riverine area of North & South 24 Parganas District and in hilly region of Darjeeling and Kalimpong Districts, Minor Irrigation schemes are being implemented. During this year, up to 31.12.2023, 240 schemes have been completed creating irrigation potential of 7,225 hectares.

Since inception, till 31.12.2023, 1,900 Minor Irrigation schemes based on surface water have been constructed having irrigation potential of about 69,500 hectares.

Under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), 298 Minor Irrigation schemes have been completed in this year up to 31.12.2023 creating irrigation potential of 6,711 hectares.

Under 'West Bengal Accelerated Development of Minor Irrigation Project (WBADMIP)', 307 schemes have been completed in this year up to 31.12.2023 creating an additional irrigation potential of 1,606 hectares.

195 'Water User Associations (WUAs)', comprising 5,324 beneficiary families, have been formed for better Management, Operation and Maintenance of Minor Irrigation Schemes.

Capacity Building has been done involving 45,451 trainee farmers through 3,424 training programmes. Further 3,933 demonstration programmes have also been conducted on Agriculture, Horticulture and Fisheries involving 8,327 beneficiary families to introduce modern practices for improving productivity, production and income of the farmers.

Since inception, 6,699 Minor Irrigation Schemes have been installed having irrigation potential of about 77,589 hectares and 2,911 WUAs have been formed. About 3,557 hectares of water bodies have been brought under fisheries activities.

In the quest for utilization of renewable resources, 208 Minor Irrigation schemes having irrigation potential of 2,789 hectares have been completed with solar power as the motive force. Additionally, water use efficiency is being enhanced by promoting micro-irrigation schemes like Drip/Sprinkler irrigation.

In this financial year up to 31.12.2023, about 52.94 km, old silted creek was re-excavated having Irrigation Potential (IP) of about 1,000 hectares. This unique initiative has helped the society in many climate-resilient ways. Recharge of ground water is facilitated, ingress of saline water has been reduced, stream bank erosion has also been reduced due to plantation activities, storm surge inundation problem got also reduced.

There has been continuous emphasis on efficient use of groundwater, increased use of surface water and conjunctive use of surface and groundwater in the field of minor irrigation. As a result, it is observed that Stage of Development/Extraction (SOD) of groundwater for the State has declined to 44.81% in 2023 from 50.29% in 2017 as per Dynamic Groundwater Resources Assessment.

3.10 Co-operation

The Cooperative movement in West Bengal is underpinned by a well-structured legislative framework and a robust organizational network. With a membership base exceeding 89 lakh individuals across 30,000

cooperative societies, this Sector plays important role in agriculture, marketing, consumers affairs, housing and service sector, and has significantly contributed to employment generation and addressed the needs of both producers and consumers.

A substantial number of flagship schemes of the State Government viz. Student Credit Card, Matsyajibi Credit Card, Bhabisyat Credit Card, Krishak Bandhu Benefit Schemes, Kanyashree, Rupashree, etc., are currently being implemented through the Cooperative Sector.

In FY 2022-23, crop loan amounting to Rs. 4,600 crore was disbursed, benefiting 15.45 lakh farmers. As of 30.11.2023, in the current fiscal, crop loan of Rs. 3,073 crore has already been issued to 10.69 lakh farmer members.

A total of 13.04 lakh 'RuPay Kisan Cards' have been issued till 30.11.2023. Crop loan is now being issued through Micro-ATMs in Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Societies (PACS).

During Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2022-23, 10.88 lakh MT paddy was procured through Cooperative societies, out of which BENFED procured 4.50 lakh MT through 460 Cooperative societies from 0.43 lakh farmers and CONFED procured 74,769 MT through 31 Cooperative societies from 41,349 farmers.

Embracing technological advancements, mobile banking facilities have been introduced by the West Bengal State Cooperative Bank Ltd. and Burdwan District Central Cooperative Bank Ltd. for their customers. Additionally, the process of upgrading the CBS in State Cooperative Bank and Central Cooperative Banks has been initiated to facilitate the adoption of the latest technology-enabled services and Cooperative Banks have been playing a crucial role in extending credit and driving the rural economy.

During 2023-24 till December, 2023, 8780 new SHGs have been formed raising the cumulative number of SHGs to 2,47,306. Notably, 5,06,659 number of SHG Members of 54,086 SHGs have been Credit-linked during the period raising the cumulative number to 18,51,785 Credit-linked members of 2,03,831 Credit-linked SHGs. Loan of Rs. 1,118.84 crore has been sanctioned to SHG Members during current fiscal till 30.11.2023.

Under RKVY, construction of 35 Rural Storage Godowns with a total capacity of 3,500 MT and 5 SHG Workshed-cum-Sales Counters involving Rs. 10.55 crore have been completed during current financial year. Construction of another 30 Rural Storage Godowns each having capacity of 100 MT, 5 Seed Processing Units, 3 Oil Mills, 9 SHG Workshed-cum-Sales Counters is under progress and is expected to be completed within the current financial year.

Under RIDF/WIF, Construction of 30 Godowns of varying capacity involving Rs. 126 crore have been completed during the current financial year. 16 Paddy Seed Processing Units involving Rs. 25.08 crore have been completed during the current financial year.

3.11 Forests

The Department is committed to ensure environment conservation, preservation of our natural heritage, promotion of sustainable livelihood, and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict.

Through a Single Day Massive Plantation Drive held on 18.07.2023 during 'Ban Mahotsav' 2023-24, with active public participation, afforestation of more than 32 lakh seedlings was achieved in a day resulting in greening of 2,368 hectares of land and more than 4,250 hectares of land have been afforested in the State under State Development Scheme. Under 'Sabujshree', a total of 58,61,265 seedlings have been distributed to the mothers of newborn children.

Conservation efforts for the Rhinoceros which is the flagship species of Jaldapara and Gorumara National Parks has shown a major success with 20% increase in their numbers from 289 to 347 over a period of 3 years, as per Rhinoceros counting conducted and report published in 2022-23.

‘All India Co-ordinated Tiger Estimation (AICTE)’ 2022 was conducted synergistically with all Tiger Range States and the report was published in 2023. In Sundarban landscape, the presence of a minimum of 101 Bengal Tigers was confirmed while in Buxa Tiger Reserve, 1 tiger was spotted on camera trap.

Under the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme, the Department has successfully bred endangered species of Gyps Vultures since 2006. So far, 33 captive bred Gyps species vulture has been released in wild and are being monitored through Satellite tracking system.

Under Batagur Baska Conservation Programme, 20 Batagur Baska or the Northern River Terrapins Turtles were released in the wild from Sundarban Tiger Reserve over the last two years. Successful captive breeding of Red Panda was carried out in Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling. In the year 2023-24, 3 Red Pandas were released in the Singalila National Parks in Darjeeling. They are doing well and have given birth to young ones.

An intrusion detection system to provide advance information of presence of elephants on the rail tracks to the locomotive drivers has been developed through a collaborative exercise between Forest Department and North Eastern Frontier Railway, Alipurduar Division. The

resultant device, a 37 km long fibre optic sensor, deployed between Madarihat and Nagrakata has potential to reduce chances of human-elephant conflict significantly.

Voluntary relocation of Bhutia Busty and Gangutia Forest village from Buxa Tiger Reserve to create an inviolate space for tigers and wildlife, has been approved and is being implemented through 'Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)' funds.

Under CAMPA, more than 321.658 hectares have been afforested under Compensatory Afforestation Component with fund of Rs. 177.42 lakh and 320.46 hectares of plantations have been raised under Net Present Value Component with Rs. 72.73 lakh during 2023-24.

The 2nd phase of the JICA assisted 'Project for Forest and Biodiversity Conservation for Climate Change Response in West Bengal' with a project cost of Rs. 650 crore has been approved and loan agreement for the same was signed on 29th March, 2023.

In current year, e-auctions by West Bengal Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (Wbfdcl) increased by 20% to enable expeditious disposal of lots. Till November, 2023 a total of 1373 e-auctions have been conducted and around 35,000 lots were sold with sale value of more than

Rs. 210 crore. WBFDC Ltd. runs 34 Eco-tourism Centres, 25 in North Bengal and 9 in South Bengal.

Various infrastructural developments and creation of amenities have been undertaken in different Zoos, wild life parks and sanctuaries for improved conditions for the wildlife and for better experience of the visitors.

Social Infrastructure

3.12 Health & Family Welfare

The Government of West Bengal has consistently taken various steps to bring the health care system within the access and reach of the people.

‘Su-Swasthya Kendras’ (Health & Wellness Centre) have been set up to provide comprehensive Primary Health Care Services in rural and urban areas with special focus on Diabetes, Hypertension and other non-communicable diseases along with Eye-ENT-Oral health care, care of the elderly and for the patients of mental health. Out of 4,461 new sub-centres, 2,203 new sub-centers have already been operationalized and the rest will be made operational by 2025-26. To further strengthen Primary Health Care System at Sub-Center level, it has been decided by the State Government to operationalize a total of 14,072 Su-Swasthya Kendra (SSKs) by March, 2024 and 16,616 by 2025-26. Since, its launch, Su-Swasthya Kendras have seen a footfall of 19.16 crore and 15.94 crore patients have received free medicine.

Under the flagship ‘Swasthya Sathi Scheme’, 2.45 crore families all over the State are covered at present. A total of 2,749 hospitals and nursing homes are enlisted under the Scheme. Since inception, more than 65 lakh beneficiaries have availed the services amounting to more than Rs. 8,600 crore in this scheme. More than 2,000 crore was incurred as scheme expenditure in 2023-24 as on 31.12.2023. Everyday around 6,000 patients avail this facility.

Under ‘Chokher Alo’, since inception 1.31 crore persons have been screened. 12.45 lakh cataract surgeries have been done and 14.48 lakh free spectacles have been distributed. Further 21 Satellite Eye OTs and 2 Eyes OTs dedicated eye ward have been established in Rural Hospitals and in Sub-Divisional/District Hospitals. Due to specific interventions, 10 Districts have attained ‘Cataract Blindness Backlog Free’ (CBBF) status.

Under ‘Shishu Saathi’ scheme 29,500 congenital heart disease cases and 9,699 cleft lip/ palate & club foot cases have been treated in the State since inception of the scheme providing free super specialized tertiary level care for children.

Institutional Delivery has increased to 99.2% in 2023 from 68.1% in 2011. Maternal Mortality Rate has come down to 103 from 113 per 1 lakh live births in 2011. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has also come down to 19

per 1,000 live births from 34 in 2011. 99.75% of the children have been fully immunized in 2023 against 65% in 2011. To assist pregnant women, 13 waiting huts are functional now. Additionally, to provide quality health care, 14 MCH hubs are currently operational and 2 more MCH hubs are under construction.

The innovative tele-medicine service, 'Swasthya Ingit' is now operational at 6,680 Su-Swasthya Kendras, 780 PHCs & 465 UPHCs and 2.47 crore consultations were made on the system. Around 70,000 people are getting benefited from this scheme daily.

'Fair Price Medicine Shops' (FPMS) have been set up in PPP mode, since December, 2012. Presently 117 FPMS are functional giving discount of 48%-80% on MRP of medicines. Since inception, discount of more than Rs. 2,700 crore has been availed under 9.08 crore prescriptions.

'Fair Price Diagnostic Centers (FPDC)' and dialysis centres have been established from medical colleges to secondary tier hospitals. 158 such units (20 MRI, 46 CT scan, 33 digital x-rays, 13 Audio Vestibular Clinic and 01 PET Scan and 45 dialysis units) are functional in the State. Since inception, 2.37 crore patients have availed services worth around Rs. 1,500 crore.

To ensure affordable, accessible and quality health care services for all, Department of Health & Family Welfare currently 16,741 doctors including specialist doctors,

56,898 nurses including 2nd Auxilliary Nurse & Midwife (ANM), 8,303 para-medical staff and 61,894 ASHAs are in place in 2023.

Ayush System of medication has become significant in delivering Healthcare. Initiatives are being taken for promoting the different branches of AYUSH viz., Ayurveda, Homoeopathy, Unani and Yoga. Academic session as well as OPD facilities for 'YOGA SHRI' (Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College & Hospital) have started at Belur, Howrah. Besides OPD & IPD services in Ayurvedic Medical Colleges & Hospitals and Homoeopathic Medical Colleges & Hospitals, OPD services have been started at Integrated AYUSH Hospital in Paschim Medinipur. In the present year more than 77 lakh beneficiaries have received effective patient care services through AYUSH OPDs.

Blood Centre (Blood Bank) facilities have increased to 89 units in 2023-24 from 58 in 2011. Further, 40 BCSUs (Blood Component Separation Units) are functioning round the clock across the State. The number of BCSUs has remarkably increased to 40 from only 9 in 2011.

Dengue is a major Public Health concern in many States of India including West Bengal. State Government has taken various proactive steps for prevention of dengue. The number of dengue testing facilities under the State Government has increased from 149 in 2022 to 197 in 2023.

Tele Mental Health Service has been made operational and psychological tele-consultation service is being provided on 24×7 basis. Till December 2023 nearly 20,000 patients including their relatives have been successfully counselled by 40 Counsellors. Treatment & care have been given to more than 4.81 lakh patients in FY 2023-24 up to December, 2023 by 5 State run Mental Hospitals, District & Sub-Division Hospitals and DMHP outreach camps.

3 Terminal Cancer Care Centres are being established namely at College of Medicine Sagar Dutta Hospital, Burdwan Medical College & Hospital and Murshidabad Medical College & Hospital. State Government has also signed MoU with Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai to develop 2 State of the Art Cancer Care Centres at IPGMER, Kolkata and North Bengal Medical College & Hospital, Siliguri.

The Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardio Vascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS & NPC) has been rolled-out in urban areas under NUHM. Under this programme, population based and opportunistic screening of common NCDs (Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardio Vascular Diseases and 3 most common occurring Cancers — Oral, Breast and Cervical) are being done from all the health facility centres (Su-Swasthya Kendras to District Hospital).

3.13 School Education

There has been sustained and consistent improvement of infrastructure and human resources in the school education sector since 2011, with the objective of providing quality education and retention of students. Around 800 schools from Junior High to High School level and around 2,200 schools from High to Higher Secondary level have been upgraded. 7,251 new schools and more than 2.18 lakh additional classrooms have been made to accommodate the growing number of students. 9,310 schools have been brought under Information & Communication Technology (ICT) programme so far.

In addition, more than 42,000 girls' toilets, more than 26,000 toilets and 7,971 toilets for Children With Special Need (CWSN), have been constructed. The State Government provided free school uniforms to more than 11.99 crore school children and text books to students from pre-primary to class-XII. During the year 2023-24, more than 23,700 Braille Books (for blind students) and large font books (for low vision students) have been distributed among the CWSN students. 60,379 CWSN girl students have received stipend. Escort allowance and Transport allowance have been paid to 64,734 and 47,031 CWSN students respectively.

An one-time grant of Rs. 10,000 is given to each student of Class XII of the Government/Government Aided/

Sponsored Schools and Madrasahs for purchasing tablets/smart phones to access the e-learning mode under 'Taruner Swapno' Scheme. Till date more than 3.67 crore students have received the benefit under the Scheme, including around 9.7 lakh students in 2023-24.

Marksheets & Certificates of Madhyamik and Uchcha-Madhyamik examinations for the period between 2012 and 2022 have been uploaded and integrated with the Digilocker platform, to provide easy access to the students/stakeholders. Presently, among 1.42 crore students from Primary to Higher Secondary level, 1.30 crore students (92%) have their Aadhaar number captured in the 'Banglar Shiksha' Portal. To ensure complete Aadhaar coverage of the uncovered students, Statewide programme for Aadhaar enrollment of students was started from September, 2023 and in the first phase, nearly 70,000 students have been enrolled. Besides, an online portal to provide NOC to the private schools seeking affiliation to the CBSE & CISCE Board/Council is operational since last year, which has so far benefited 39 schools.

Under the Mid-day-Meal (PM Poshan) program, 100% Government/Government Aided/ Government Sponsored schools in the State have been covered. Currently, nearly 1.18 crore students are under its coverage. 100% schools are having LPG connection for cooking Mid-day-Meal.

West Bengal has moved upward from Grade-VI to Grade-I on Performance Grading Index (PGI). The State has ranked number 1 at national level among major States on Foundational Numeracy Index, 2022 as published by the Government of India.

3.14 Higher Education

State Government has been consistently striving towards improvement in higher education with active participation of private sector. The number of universities in the State have increased from 12 to 42 in last twelve years, out of which 31 are State Aided Universities and 11 are Private Universities. There are 518 Government and Government aided colleges, out of which 52 new Government General Degree Colleges have been established in last 12 years. This has resulted in increase of enrolment in Higher Education from 13.24 lakh during 2010-2011 to 27.14 lakh during 2023-24 academic session.

During 2022-23, around Rs. 1,500 crore have been allocated for around 9.56 lakh students under 'Swami Vivekananda Merit cum Means Scholarship Scheme'. The portal of Swami Vivekananda Merit cum Means Scholarship Scheme is operational for the students of Class XI & XII and for UG & PG courses. During this academic session up to 31.12.2023, more than 4.4 lakh students have already applied online under the Scheme.

The State Government has extended Scholarship benefits to the girl students for pursuing post-graduation in regular courses under Kanyashree-3. During 2022-2023, 42,783 students got Kanyashree-3 Scholarship and in this academic session, more than 29,700 girl students have applied for this scholarship.

Under the West Bengal Student Credit Card Scheme, an education loan up to Rs.10 lakh for students of West Bengal, at simple interest @ 4% p.a. is also provided for pursuing higher education in any recognized institution in India or abroad.

Under the West Bengal Student Credit Card Scheme more than 62,000 students have so far been sanctioned loan at a simple interest rate @ 4% p.a., with aggregate loan amounting more than Rs. 2,000 crore.

3.15 Technical Education, Training and Skill Development

State Government has been consistently working to address the requirement of skilled manpower across various sectors and to narrow the existing gap between the demand and supply of skills through various innovative schemes and infrastructural development.

Under 'Utkarsh Bangla', the flagship scheme for skill development of the State, presently 1,429 training

providers through 3,036 Training Centres are providing training in 138 job-roles across 38 sectors in all 23 Districts in the State.

Rojgar Seva Portal, Aamar Karmadisha 2.0 (Psychometric Counselling App), Paschim Banga Society for Skill Development Portal 2.0, Assessment Portal of WBSCTVESD and Entrepreneurship Development Programme have been launched on 23rd August, 2023.

Till date, since inception, about 10.87 lakh candidates have been covered under the Utkarsh Bangla short term interventions through PBSSD.

RPL and RPL-cum-Bridge Courses have been launched in non-project mode through PBSSD portal. 3,915 candidates were trained as Masons through RPL in the districts of Malda and Murshidabad in convergence with the West Bengal Minorities' Development and Finance Corporation (WBMDFC).

Short-term Training Interventions have been conducted in convergence with Departments across the State. 1,231 candidates were trained in job-roles of Multicuisine Cook, Shop Floor Manager and Accountant in convergence with State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM).

About 1.91 lakh candidates have registered through 'Aamar Karmadisha', the application for Career

Counselling. The services under the Aamar Karmadisha are also now offered through Duare Sarkar camps across the State.

Extensive outreach initiatives have been undertaken encouraging industries and associations to get on-boarded under the Industry-led Training Programme providing support and sponsorship for fresh training and upgradation of skills. As on date, 19,644 industries and associations have been onboarded under the module with PBSSD.

There is at least one Polytechnic in each of 62 Sub-Divisions out of 69 Sub-Divisions with an aim to have each sub-division with 1 Polytechnic. Total intake capacity in Polytechnics increased to 40,142 in the year 2023 compared to 17,185 as recorded before in 1st June, 2011. Several courses in the emerging technical areas have been started in new Polytechnics viz., Mechatronics, Travel & Tourism, Renewable Energy, Cyber Forensics and Information Security, Interior Decoration, etc.

Drone courses have been started at 10 Government ITIs in West Bengal with an overall intake of 480. Apprenticeship Mela has been organised in 56 ITIs in 2022-23 and 8,263 candidates have been selected. In FY 2023-24, MSME Month was celebrated during August, 2023, where 60 Establishments and around 10,000 candidates have been registered for apprenticeship.

Seating capacity have been increased by 4,424 during the current session after opening 13 new Government ITIs in PPP mode.

2,405 vocational students have been placed through job fairs and placement drives. 37,055 numbers of vocational students have been given financial assistance from Government in Financial Year 2022-23 for procurement of Tab / Smart Phone under 'Taruner Swapno'. In 2023-24 around 40,000 students will be benefited through this scheme.

To cater to the shortage of healthcare workers 15 short term courses have been created in collaboration with H&FW Department and will be rolled out shortly.

Recently subjects like Computer Hardware and Software Course, AI/ML course and Industrial safety course have been introduced as compulsory subjects for all students of Polytechnics. The Department is working in collaboration with the ASPIRE Project of UK Government to create a Center of Excellence roadmap for Intelligent Mobility Skill Center for e-Vehicle and alternative fuel. Under the ASPIRE Project the Council has created a unique course for e-Vehicle as an add on which will help Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) drivers to shift to e-Vehicles.

3.16 Youth Services and Sports

The Department has focused on development of sports by setting up academies in various disciplines of sports such as Archery, Football, Tennis, Table Tennis, Badminton, Swimming and Rifle Shooting.

An International Standard Hockey Stadium is being constructed at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan. Upgradation work of Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, Netaji Indoor Stadium, Rabindra Sarovar Stadium and Kishore Bharati Stadium have also been taken up.

‘Durand Cup’ 2023 was organised successfully in collaboration with Indian Armed Forces. AFC Cup 2023 and ISL 2023 were conducted successfully at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan and Kishore Bharati Krirangan.

The number of trainees at the Bengal Archery Academy, Jhargram have increased from 32 to 64 at present. 1 trainee of Archery Academy won silver medal in Asia Cup (Stage III), 2023. Five archers of the Academy have been selected in the State Team for Junior & Senior National Archery Championship, and 3 archers for Sub-Junior National Archery Championship. Archers of this Academy have won 3 Gold and 2 Silver Medals in Archery School National Games, 2023. West Bengal has ranked 2nd in the overall State Ranking where 4 Archers are from Bengal Archery Academy, Jhargram.

Bengal Table Tennis Academy has been started for providing high standard training to the youth of the State. The State Table Tennis Championship was organised successfully with more than 1,400 participants at Bengal Table Tennis Academy.

Around 99,433 students have completed training through the Youth Computer Training Centres (YCTC) successfully in 2023 from 878 YCTCs. Fund has been sanctioned for 03 Multigyms, 08 Mini-Indoor Games Complexes and 03 Playgrounds. 06 Mini Stadiums have been inaugurated in Purulia.

‘Rakhi Bandhan Utsav’, ‘Vivek Chetana Utsav’, ‘Khela Hobe Diwas’ and mountaineering activities have been observed during 2023. Orientation Camp of Rock Climbing was conducted at Susunia.

3.17 Information & Cultural Affairs

The annual Durga Puja Carnival comprising display and procession of iconic and award-winning Durga idols was organized on 27th October, 2023 on Red Road, Kolkata and in all Districts on 26th October, 2023 through colourful tableaux and musical and dance performances by a host of artists. Durga Puja has recorded UNESCO’s recognition as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Under ‘Lok Prasar Prakalpa’ more than 1.85 lakh folk artists between the age of 18-60 are receiving Rs. 1,000 per month as retainer fee. Senior folk artists, who are above

60 years are also receiving Rs. 1,000 per month as Pension. Apart from this, for folk performances, the registered artists receive Rs. 1,000 as performance fee.

‘Bangla Sangeet Mela’ saw the participation of more than 5,000 singers, musicians and other artists. Literature Festival and Little Magazine Mela were organised for promotion of Bengali language and literature; ‘Biswabangla Lok Sanskriti Utsav’, ‘Banglar Adivasi Hastashilpa Exhibition’ were held for preservation of folk culture; Jatra Utsav, Drama Festivals, State Shishu Kishore Utsav, Uday Shankar Dance Festival, State-level Classical Music Conference, Poush Utsav, ‘Bangla Moder Garbo’ were among the cultural programmes successfully organized across the State during the period. Events by ‘Rajbangshi Bhasha Academy’, ‘Manbhum Cultural Academy’ and other such organizations catered to the aspirations of various communities residing in the State.

The 29th ‘Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF)’ was held from 5th December to 12th December, 2023 with its colourful star studded inauguration at Netaji Indoor Stadium. Two exhibitions on the memory of Mrinal Sen and Dev Anand were organized during the Festival and the entire event was conducted successfully with pomp and grandeur. A total of 218 films from 39 countries were screened at 23 venues.

The ‘Mahanayak Uttam Kumar Award Ceremony’ was held on 24th July, 2023 in a grand manner. Actors/ technicians of films were felicitated in this ceremony.

For felicitating actors/technicians of Television Industry for their outstanding performance, the ‘Tele Samman Award Ceremony’ was held on 24th August, 2023.

During 2023-24, this Department organized observance of birth and death anniversaries of personalities like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam & celebration of International Mother Language Day, ‘Shraddhanjali’ tributes to noted singers, songwriters and other leading lights of Bengal’s cultural landscape.

A total of 95 short/documentary films and feature films have been successfully digitized so far. Simultaneously, the State Government has taken initiative to digitize and restore all Government produced films being preserved in the State Film Archive at ‘Cinema Centenary Building’.

Under ‘Literary and Cultural Pension Scheme Financial Assistance’ are provided to aged and financially weak artists. In 2023-24, so far, 101 aged artists have been provided monthly financial assistance under the Scheme.

Under Group Health Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance schemes for cine and television artists, Technicians & Workers, 3951 primary members along with their maximum 5 dependent family members have been covered.

Under ‘Social Welfare Scheme for Purohits’ (SWSP), monthly financial assistance to financially weak purohits and priests at the rate of Rs. 1,500 per month is being provided by the State Government to 28,310 beneficiaries.

Under Financial Assistance to Jatra Artists and Theatre Groups, the State Government provides one time financial assistance of Rs. 25,000 each to distressed and aged jatra artists and Rs. 50,000 (one time assistance) to each of the theatre groups.

Government of West Bengal has introduced a pension scheme for journalists. Presently, 138 retired journalists are being provided monthly pension @ Rs. 2,500 under ‘West Bengal Pension Scheme for the Journalists, 2018’ through Direct Benefit Transfer.

An archaeological exploration has been conducted at Dwarkeshwar and Gandheswari river valley in Bankura to identify and record the extent of prehistoric assemblage of Susunia foot-hill villages under Chhatna Police Station, and Bishinda hill area under Gangajalghati Police Station.

Digitization of antiquities in State Archaeological Museum is going on to prepare a comprehensive catalogue. Digital kiosk has been set up for the visitors for a virtual tour of the Museum. It provides an overview of virtual gallery display, exhibit sequencing, details of artifacts.

3.18 Mass Education Extension & Library Services

An amount of over Rs. 8 crore has been released in favour of 5,182 students with disabilities (studying in class IX and onwards) for 'SAHANUBHUTI Scholarship Scheme' who have scored atleast 40% marks in the last annual examination.

114 students of Sponsored Special Schools and 264 inmates of Educational Welfare Homes have passed the Madhyamik Examination, 2023. Also, 54 students of Sponsored Special Schools and 83 inmates of Educational Welfare Homes have passed Higher Secondary Examination, 2023.

Fund (@ Rs. 10,000) has been allotted to 56 specially abled students of Class XII for purchase of Tablet Computer/Smartphone for betterment of their studies.

For providing opportunities of Higher Studies to specially abled students [visually impaired (VI) & hearing impaired (HI)] for the first time in the State, initiatives have been taken up for setting up a Degree College at Banipur, North 24 Parganas.

The State Government is conducting Certificate Courses in Library Science at People's (Janata) Government College, Banipur, North 24 Parganas for the educated unemployed youth and deputed candidates working in the Government & Government Sponsored Libraries.

In 2022-23, 724 Non-Government and Non-Sponsored Libraries/Club-cum-Libraries/Libraries under Non-Government and Non-Sponsored Educational Institutions run by different Minority Communities of West Bengal were selected for financial assistance amounting to Rs. 181 crore.

The continuous process of granting free library membership is going on for Children Membership up to the age of 18 years, General Membership for people aged between 18-60 years, Senior Citizen Membership and Global Membership to the eminent persons viz. MPs, MLAs, VCs, Professors, Advocates and Members of Zilla Parishads, etc.

The State Government has created 'Career Guidance Centers' for unemployed youth to help them with various informative books, journals, newspapers, periodicals, etc. for appearing in various competitive examinations and interviews through State Central Library, 26 Government and Government Sponsored District Libraries and 232 Town / Sub-Divisional Libraries.

Public Library Day had been observed on 31.08.2023 in all the Districts across the State.

Physical Infrastructure

3.19 Public Health Engineering

‘Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)’ with 50:50 funding pattern between the Centre and the State is under implementation with the vision that every rural household shall have assured drinking water supply in adequate quantity of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis leading to improvement in living standards of rural communities through ‘Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs)’.

Up to 31st December 2023, under ‘Jal Jeevan Mission’, 9,404 schemes have been approved involving 174.42 lakh FHTCs at a cost of over Rs. 57,133 crore, of which work for 9,121 Schemes involving 166.15 lakh FHTCs have been grounded. So far 71.58 lakh rural households have been provided with a tap connection.

59,916 Schools, 43,866 Anganwadis and 8,298 Health Centres have also been covered with running water supply under ‘Jal Jeevan Mission’. Also 2,914 Gram Panchayat Buildings, 1,127 Ashrams, 2,627 Community Centres, 102 Community Toilets and 309 other Government Offices have been given access to Functional Tap Connections.

For maintaining and ensuring supply of quality potable drinking water, 219 water testing laboratories are functioning in the State to monitor the quality of water being supplied to the rural population, which is highest

amongst all States in the country. 216 laboratories have been accredited/recognised by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) putting our State again at the 1st position.

42,876 youth have been trained as Plumbers, Pipe Fitters, Pump/Valve operators, Electricians and Mechanics under the skill development programme of 'Utkarsha Bangla' for their engagement for implementation of 'Jal Jeevan Mission' as well as Operation & Maintenance of the created assets.

47,889 ASHA workers have been trained for testing of water quality using Field Test Kits (FTK). 5,09,739 water samples from Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs), Schools, Anganwadi Centers and other Public Institutions have been tested through FTKs by ASHAs.

A water supply project in Purulia, at a sanctioned cost of over Rs. 1,296 crore is under implementation with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which will benefit a population of 6.32 lakh on completion of the Project in March 2025. Another, Asian Development Bank (ADB) assisted project is under implementation in the Districts of North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Bankura and Purba Medinipur at a sanctioned cost of more than Rs. 2,496 crore which will benefit a population of 24.11 lakh on completion of the project in December, 2024.

The Department has been actively involved in reaching out to the people affected by natural calamities. 35.30 lakh drinking water bottles, 3.10 crore drinking water pouches and 45.90 million litres of potable water through water tankers were distributed to the affected people in the aftermath of drought, Flood like situations, besides for Melas, Festivals, Government Meetings etc.

During 'Ganga Sagar Mela, 2023' infrastructural arrangements like temporary accommodation, Safe Drinking Water Supply, Sanitation Facilities, Waste Water & Solid Waste Management and Fire Fighting Arrangements have been made for the pilgrims and tourists.

3.20 Transport

Due to sustained efforts to enhance collection of Motor Vehicle Revenue, Rs. 2,890.27 crore has been collected in the current financial year upto December, 2023.

'Vehicle Location Tracking System (VLTS)' with Command & Control has been introduced in 2022 and the device with panic button is being fixed in transport and other vehicles. These are providing real-time vehicle location tracking, geo-referencing, safety features and few other safety provisions for sending emergency alerts. Almost one third of the targeted vehicles have been fitted

with such device so far. Chip based Smart Card type of Driving Licence (DL) and vehicle Registration Certificate (RC) have been introduced.

Integrated Checkposts with Truck Parking Places/ Terminals at International Border Checkposts like Petrapole in North 24 Parganas, Hilli in Dakshin Dinajpur, Changrabandha in Cooch Behar and Fulbari in Jalpaiguri districts have been started. 'SUVIDHA' portal has been made operational to minimize waiting time of goods vehicles at ICP/LCS. After introduction, minimum waiting time has been reduced from 7 days to a couple of hours. One weighbridge complex-cum-checkpost between Panagarh and Moregram has become operational with effect from 01.09.2023 under B.O.O. model.

With a view to upgrade the road transport infrastructure, bus terminuses have been constructed / modernized at Tarapith, Umarpur, Chandrakona Road and Nabadwip. Construction of new bus stand at Belda and renovation of Dhaniakhali bus stand, Cooch Behar NBSTC bus depot, Durgapur City Center SBSTC bus depot have been completed. Construction of new bus terminus at Bhagwangola & Baharampur (Barnaparichay-SBSTC) in Murshidabad district, Belda in Paschim Medinipur district, Kurseong in Darjeeling district, Jhilimili

(SBSTC) in Bankura district and infrastructure development work at Amtala bus stand, Joka CTC bus stand in South 24 Parganas and truck terminal at Dhupguri have been undertaken.

13 construction projects of gangway-cum-pontoon jetties and 3 helipads at different locations with project cost of about Rs. 62.05 crore are going on and likely to be completed in the current financial year.

The 'West Bengal Inland Water Transport, Logistics and Spatial Development Project' assisted by World Bank having a State Share of USD 45 million (approx. Rs. 328 crore) and World Bank funding of USD 105 million (approx. Rs. 772 crore) will facilitate passenger and freight movement across the Hooghly River; undertake spatial planning to improve accessibility in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area; enhance the quality of life of its residents; and contribute to the growth of the State's logistics sector with construction of 29 modern jetties, electronic smart gates in 40 locations, 22 improved steel vessels in subsequent years for safe and efficient passenger movement.

Activities/programmes related to Road Safety are jointly implemented by Transport Department, Police Authorities, Public Works Department, UD&MA, P&RD, H&FW and

School Education. The co-ordinated approach has played an instrumental role to reduce the road accidents & casualties.

The integrated 'SANJOG' Portal has been launched to realize the fines conveniently and with transparency for cases under MV Act lodged by Transport Department, WB Police and Kolkata Police.

Most of the citizen centric services like registration of motor vehicles, certificate of fitness, payment of tax, permit for commercial vehicles, driving licenses etc. offered by Transport Department have been made online and citizens can also access some of these services from BSK portal.

Government supported App Cab services named 'YATRI-SATHI' has been introduced where both the riders and the driver partners would be financially benefited compared to the existing ODTTAs.

3.21 Public Works

The State Government has given utmost importance to improving and increasing the road connectivity which forms the life line of the Economy. In the current FY the Department has so far completed 225 road projects and 21 bridges covering 1,630 km at a total project cost of Rs. 2,430 crore and rehabilitated 43 old dilapidated bridges for Rs. 17 crore.

The Public Works Department has framed a Common Policy related to the laying of a City Gas Distribution Network for granting permission for laying of underground Steel Pipeline and Medium Density Polyethylene Pipeline through the roads under all Government Departments, Local Bodies and State Authorities under the control of the Government of West Bengal for adopting favourable impact on the environment and to supply affordable and safe fuel to the public.

The Department has completed widening of roads from a single lane to a 2-lane with a Paved shoulder and strengthening of the Kolkata - Basanti - Godkhali Road (SH-3A) from 68 km to 96.684 km in the District of South 24 Parganas with the project cost of Rs. 146.02 crore in the current Financial Year.

Construction of 126 metre long new 2-lane Bridge over Teesta - Mahananda Left Canal under 'Bhorer Alo' (Gajoldoba Hub project) including widening and strengthening of Bridge near Sahudangi in the District of Jalpaiguri with the project cost of Rs. 127.75 crore has also been completed.

Widening and strengthening of 19.40 km long Maynaguri - Ramsai Road including construction of a new 2-lane Bridge over Teesta - Jaldhaka Main Canal in the District of Jalpaiguri with the project cost of Rs. 69.87 crore has been done in the current Financial Year.

Strengthening of Panagarh - Illambazar - Dubrajpur Road (SH-14) in the District of Paschim Bardhaman and Birbhum with the project cost of Rs. 107.78 crore has been done in the current Financial Year.

Strengthening of Chunakhali - Jalangi Road (SH-11) in the District of Murshidabad with the project cost of Rs. 47.59 crore and widening from Single Lane to 2-Lane and strengthening of Pundibari - Baneswar Road in the District of Cooch Behar with the project cost of Rs. 36.40 crore were also done.

Department has constructed 9.20 km long new road from 7th Mile (Takdah) to Glenburn Fatak including the construction of two new Bridges in the district of Darjeeling with the project cost of Rs. 35.90 crore. Construction of new Bridge over river Dwaraka at 21.45 km of Berhampore - Kandi - Sultanpur Road in the District of Murshidabad with the project cost of Rs. 30.92 crore is also done in the current Financial Year.

Strengthening & widening of Sodepur - Madhyamgram Road in the district of North 24 Parganas with the project cost of Rs. 20 crore and Matigara - Kurseong Road in the District of Darjeeling with the project cost of Rs. 18.40 crore have been completed.

With project cost of Rs. 16.30 crore, construction of Bridge in replacement of existing vented causeway over

river Gandheswari at Satighat at Bankura - Durgapur Road in the District of Bankura and the construction of another Bridge with project cost of Rs. 16.17 crore in replacement of the existing narrow Bridge over Kethia Khal on Chandrakona - Ghatal Road (SH-4) in the District of Paschim Medinipur have been completed in the current Financial Year.

Construction of a High-Level Bridge in replacement of the existing damaged causeway over Devnadi in the District of Jhargram at a project cost is Rs. 13.57 crore as well as the beautification of Nayanjuli from Bangur to Dum Dum Park beside Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue (V.I.P. Road) including the construction of Footpath and Bio-Diversity Park in the District of North 24 Parganas at a project cost is Rs. 9.17 crore have been undertaken in the current Financial Year.

3.22 Land & Land Reforms and Refugee Relief & Rehabilitation

With an intent to harmonize and consolidate citizen services, the Government has put a special emphasis on disposal of mutation and conversion cases. 73,84,271 mutation cases have been disposed and 1,91,700 conversion cases have been cleared so far, in this Financial Year.

The Government has taken an important decision to regularize all refugee establishments & colonies and provide Free Hold Title Deeds to the legitimate persons and to ensure the sustainable development of infrastructural facilities at the RR colonies. Beside this, a large number of poor families have been staying in State Government land for decades. The Government has taken initiative to regularize their occupancy by issuing LR patta, NGNB patta and LTS on 'as is where is' basis.

The Government has been consistently following the principle of 'No forceful acquisition of land and no forceful eviction of people from their land'. Land is being made available for Government projects by following the Land Purchase Policy which is based on consent of the land owner and mutually agreed compensation and a transparent process.

Complete exemption of khajna (land revenue and cess) from all agricultural lands has been introduced since 2017.

A new policy has been introduced for conversion of status of land from Leasehold to Freehold for government land given on lease (all usage) which will enable existing leaseholders to become owner on payment of conversion fees. This will help in the ease of doing business for the owners. The provision of settlement of vacant Government land on freehold basis has also been introduced. A policy

has also been introduced for change of use of leased land lying vacant/unused beyond permissible period. This Department has allowed regularization of conversion of land excluding water bodies & tea gardens on post-facto basis in the interest of raiyats.

In December 2023 more than 14,000 pattas have been distributed which included Agri-Patta, Tea Garden Patta and FHTD in refugee colonies.

The e-Khajna module helped people to deposit land revenue online from their homes and more than 22,81,368 raiyats of non-agricultural lands have availed the online services and paid more than Rs. 98.54 crore till date.

During the current Financial Year, the total revenue collection has been Rs. 2163.13 crore upto 31.12.2023.

3.23 Power

During the current Financial Year, 5.14 lakh new connections were provided in the State. Seven 33/11 KV Sub-Stations with capacity of around 114.1 MVA have been commissioned. Further, Capacity addition for thirteen existing 33/11 KV Sub-Stations with additional capacity of 89.8 MVA to cater the additional load demand has been completed. Capacity addition for another 8 no. 33/11 KVA Sub-Stations with additional capacity of nearly 29.6 MVA to be made within 2023-24.

The Project for System Strengthening and Grid Modernization of Distribution network of WBSEDCL (WBEDGMP) under External Aided Project (EAP) funded by World Bank (IBRD) and AIIB loan & 30% (State Share) having total project cost of Rs. 2,800.54 crore, have been taken up since FY 2021-22 with cumulative outgo of Rs. 1,000.65 crore.

As a part of relief to our consumers government allowed partial waiver of outstanding dues prior to 31.12.2018 with full waiver of billed/ projected LPSC.

The 'Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)', a joint endeavor of the State and the Central Government was finalized for various improvements in electrical infrastructure throughout the State of the West Bengal with the estimated contribution of Government of West Bengal for Rs. 1,394.46 crore in phases.

In order to increase the billing efficiency and deduction of losses, a program for installation of static meter of 7.26 lakh of consumer premises in phases has been undertaken. Commercial and Industrial Consumers having connected load from 5 KVA to 50 KVA and all Government Consumer will be taken up in 1st Phase and all consumers irrespective of their load and class in 2nd Phase. Installation of nearly 30,000 Smart Meters covering Commercial, Industrial & Government consumers having connected loads from 5 KVA to 50 KVA have already been made.

For development of e-Vehicle charging infrastructure, the e-Vehicle charging stations have been planned in the vacant land of Sub-Stations on revenue sharing mode with private players. The process of setting up of 187 e-Vehicle charging stations has been started.

WBSEDCL had successfully commissioned 2 nos. 50 MVA 132/33 transformer at Teesta Canal Fall Hydrel Project to cater the growing demand of Power. In addition to that commissioning of another 20 MVA 132/33 KV transformer is in progress. Extension of fourbay spillway of Mungpoo Kalikhola Hydrel Power Station has already been completed. WBSEDCL is also setting up first ever hydro museum at Sidrepong Hydrel Power Station (1st Hydro Electric Power project of India).

125 MW Ground Mounted Solar Power Project at Goaltore, Paschim Medinipur and 10 MW Solar Power Project at PPSP Upper Dam, Purulia has been taken up. WBSEDCL has taken up 150 MW Grid Connected Solar Pumps (7.5 kW each) for catering Power to 20,000 agriculture consumers in West Bengal under Component-C of PM - KUSUM Scheme, MNRE, GoI and 22.5 MW Off-Connected Solar Pumps (7.5 kW each) for catering Power to 3000 agriculture consumers in West Bengal. Under Component-B of PM-KUSUM Scheme, Application window in WBSEDCL Portal for non-subsidy scheme has already been started.

WBSEDCL has further strengthened the E-payment solution with inclusion of mobile wallet/BBPS/UPI/Bharat-QR etc, which enabled the consumer to pay their bills and quotation at their respective places. The online payment process is gaining popularity day by day. In addition to that more than 300 Cash Collection KIOSK at different CCC is also being operational to enable consumers to deposit their energy bill at odd hours.

‘West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (WBSETCL)’, a wholly owned company by Government of West Bengal has developed a strong in-house expertise in various facets of power transmission business.

Since April 2011 ‘West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (WBSETCL)’ has commissioned 61 EHV sub-stations (including up-gradation), with enhancement of 22,022 MVA transformation capacity (including augmentation work) and addition of 5,644.67 CKm Transmission lines. This has led to total transmission system comprising of 157 EHV sub-stations with total 40,265.36 MVA transformation capacity and 16,628.26 CKm of Transmission lines.

In 2023-24, WBSETCL has created 51,972.30 MVA Transformation Capacity including augmentation and 318.67 CKm Transmission Lines have been added during this period.

WBSETCL is maintaining its Transmission System availability consistently around 99.91% and transmission system loss to around 2.30 %, which is one of the best in the country.

To enhance power transfer capacity of existing transmission lines WBSETCL completed change of 198.45 CKm ACSR conductors of 7 EHV lines by HTLS (High Temperature Low Sag) conductor in the last year. Again, work of augmentation of conductor capacity for 284.80 CKm of 220 KV lines and 223.035 CKm of 132 KV lines have been taken up in this financial year.

It is also noteworthy to mention that WBSETCL has also taken up Integrated project for Scheduling, Accounting, Metering and Settlement of Transactions (SAMAST) and replacement of 1809 km of GI Earth Wire by OPGW. These projects are in their final implementation stages.

In 2023-24, West Bengal Power Development Company Limited (WBPDCCL) has generated 22.39197 BU upto 31.12.2023.

Deocha Pachami is the largest coal block in the country. The drilling has been completed, conceptual report has been submitted by CMPDI on Land preparation of DPR & Mining Plan.

Durgapur Projects Limited (DPL) successfully extracted 3,33,149 MT of coal drilling in Trans Damodar coal mine area and it is expected to achieve Peak Rated Capacity of the mine i.e., 10 lakh MT.

3.24 Urban Development & Municipal Affairs

West Bengal as an urbanized State has witnessed further growth in urban population during last couple of years with a significant growth of population in peri-urban areas. To cater to the needs of such areas this Department has consolidated its effort towards planned approach in providing civic amenities in such areas and also addressing the challenges of increasing urbanisation.

A consistent effort in the field of waste management in a scientific manner has touched the milestones which were set earlier. Along with the infrastructural developments like material recovery facility, construction of waste processing plant, bio-gas plant etc. emphasis has been given on general cleanliness, collection of waste from the doorsteps. Kolkata Municipal Corporation has planned to build a fully automatic Material Recovery Facility (MRF) at the cost of Rs. 27 crore which is going to be the most modern plant in the country. The processing of legacy waste is on the verge of completion and for this purpose, 302.47 acres of land has been reclaimed.

Newtown Kolkata Development Authority is in continuous effort to develop the area as a resilient, modern and citizen friendly city. Endeavour of this authority in creation and maintenance of civic infrastructure as well as aesthetic development have been acclaimed in national level and is becoming a futuristic 'model' city. During current financial year Rs.196 crore has been allotted for development of the city.

The State Government has laid due emphasis on flood management and mitigation programme. A special endeavour has been taken up to avert prolonged water logging during monsoon and to improve the drainage infrastructure. A long term action plan based on Geographical Information System to improve drainage facilities for different ULBs has already been initiated in Barrackpore Sub-Division, and Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation areas and more are in the pipeline.

'Swayamsiddha' being the major programme of this department to reduce urban poverty and creation of business opportunity in small scale has achieved major success. As on date, 86,626 Self Help Groups (SHG) have been formed with women members among 10,49,340 poor urban households of 128 Urban Local Bodies, 81,982 SHGs were provided with Revolving Fund (RF) of Rs. 10,000 each to catalyze the process of internal lending and to enable them to meet immediate credit needs.

54,782 SHGs and 9,230 individual entrepreneurs have been linked with subsidized credit. 2,834 Ward level Area Level Federations (ALF) and 128 City Level Federations (CLF) have been formed in ULBs across West Bengal; 2,450 ALFs have been provided with Revolving Fund of Rs. 50,000 each. In 2023-24, 59 ALFs and 11 CLFs have been formed.

2,061 vulnerable homeless persons have been rescued through Night Surveys and provided accommodation in 62 functional Shelters for Urban Homeless (SUH) across 52 ULBs; another 37 SUHs are under construction in different ULBs. In 2023-24, 9 SUHs have been made functional.

Micro-finance to the tune of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 50,000 each has been provided to 1,73,307 Urban Street Vendors across the State.

1,16,865 SHG members have been provided with Skill Development Training under different trades; 63,854 provided with self-employment or placed in skilled wage employment.

22,916 SHG women have been involved in School Uniform Project across ULBs of the State and have delivered 30.62 lakh sets of school uniforms to 15.31 lakh students of 7,893 Schools and Madrasahs and earned Rs. 38.68 crore as wage.

As of now 28 outlets have been made functional in the ULBs for marketing of the products of SHG groups.

Government initiated MAA programme in the urban areas to provide a meal for the needy people which is being run effectively and successfully since inception. At present, MAA Canteen is already functional in 29 Medical Colleges & District Hospitals across the state. Since inception more than 4.75 crore beneficiaries have been provided with meals through 320 operational canteens.

Sector-VI Industrial Township and Golden City Industrial Township are being developed as modern city with different infrastructural development initiatives. Construction of water supply project, street lighting arrangement, construction of roads are being undertaken with a tentative plan outlay of Rs. 590 crore.

3.25 Housing

‘CHA SUNDARI’ Housing Scheme is aimed at providing housing facilities to the permanent tea garden workers of closed/sick tea gardens, where management is not providing appropriate residential facilities and the workers do not possess pucca houses of their own. So far construction of 4,022 single storied dwelling units in 17 sites covering 07 Tea Gardens in Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri have been approved and construction of 1,171 single storied dwelling units at Dheklapara-(327), Mujnai-(324),

Toorsa-(456) and Manabari-(44) has been completed. Work is going on at present for construction of 2,851 single storied dwelling units in 11 sites covering 6 Tea Gardens in Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri Districts. State Government has recently launched 'Cha Sundari Extension Scheme' to provide financial assistance of Rs. 1.20 lakh to each tea garden worker who has been allotted land parcels for construction of their dwelling house.

Nijashree Housing Scheme is aimed at providing housing among the families belonging to Lower Income Group (LIG) and Middle Income Group (MIG) categories. Construction works have been completed for 112 flats and works are going on at 8 other sites.

For the benefit of patient parties, Housing Department has been providing Night Shelters within the campus of all Medical Colleges, District Hospitals, Sub-Division and Super Specialty Hospitals in consultation with the Health & Family Welfare Department. During the current FY night shelters works have been completed in 4 sites with capacity for nearly 400 persons. Construction at other two sites is in progress.

Under 'Karmanjali' Scheme, accommodation on low rent basis is being provided to working women who are single and have no residence in the city. Construction work of 70 Single occupancy units are on-going at Contai, Purba Medinipur under the scheme.

This Department provides accommodation to the State Government employees by constructing RHEs all over the State. Construction works of Rental Housing Estates have been completed for 112 flats in 03 sites during the current FY.

‘West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority’ and ‘West Bengal Real Estate Administrative Tribunal’ have been established. All functions of WBRERA and WBREAT including lodging and redressal of complaints have been made online. 1,237 cases for Registration of Real Estate Projects, 324 cases for Registration of Real Estate Agents and 541 Complaint Cases have been received, out of which 816, 278 and 171 cases respectively have been duly disposed of till date.

3.26 Non-conventional & Renewable Energy Sources

The Non-Conventional & Renewable Energy Sources Department promotes and facilitates the optimum utilization of West Bengal’s Renewable Energy potential by providing a guiding framework and development of appropriate RE technologies.

For installation of Rooftop Grid connected Solar PV power generation system, clearance has been given for 950 Government schools and Madrasahs. Installation work has been completed in 401 schools. Net meter has

been arranged by WBSEDCL in 107 sites. In 2023-24, rooftop grid connected Solar PV Power Plant have been installed at 610 Schools.

Installation of Rooftop Grid Connected Solar PV Power Plant in Circuit House of Jhargram and at the Collectorate building of Purba Medinipur have been taken up.

7.531 MU have been generated as on date in FY 2023-24 from Bhajanghat in the district of Nadia, 10 MW ground mounted Solar PV Power. While 0.1014 MU power have been generated in the 2 MWp Grid connected Ground mounted Solar PV Power plant at Jamuria, Paschim Burdwan in FY 2023-24.

An amount of Rs. 47,76,200 has been sanctioned and released for installation of Solar Pumps for irrigation purpose in respect of 22 Self Help groups in Manbazar-I Block of Purulia District under Decentralized Renewable Energy applications. The project has been completed.

Social Empowerment

3.27 Women and Child Development and Social Welfare

The Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare majorly implements schemes and programme which are targeted towards vulnerable section of the society. In 2023-24 also, the department's flagship social security schemes are continuing to benefit people of the state with wider coverage.

‘Lakshmir Bhandar’, a pioneering effort of the State Government in providing a universal basic income for women, has covered 1.98 crore beneficiaries, with the scheme’s expenditure so far being Rs. 10,101.87 crore in 2023-24.

‘Kanyashree Prakalpa’, the Government of West Bengal’s scheme for the empowerment of adolescent girls, has completed a decade of implementation and has brought 85.53 lakh beneficiaries under its umbrella. In 2023-24 so far, 20.69 lakh girls enrolled for Kanyashree's Annual Scholarship, and 4.20 lakh girls for its One-Time Grant. The budget provision for the scheme Rs. 1,550.13 crore.

‘Rupashree Prakalpa’, a marriage assistance scheme for women from poor families, has supported 1.93 lakh beneficiaries with Rs. 529.04 crore expenditure in 2023-24.

During 2023-24 so far, 19.44 lakh senior citizens have been covered under the Old Age Pensions scheme, with disbursements amounting to Rs. 1,678.5 crore. 19.27 lakh beneficiaries have been covered under the Widow Pensions scheme, with disbursements amounting to Rs. 1,606.24 crore so far. Under the ‘Manabik’ Pension Scheme for persons with disability of 40% or more, so far, Rs. 625.32 crore have been disbursed so far to 7.18 lakh beneficiaries.

Nutritional services provided through Anganwadi Centres have reduced malnutrition in the State, and only 3.98% of children below 5 years are reported as underweight. About 69.11 lakh children below 6 years of age and 12.29 lakh pregnant and lactating mothers received hot cooked meals for 26 days each month regularly. Approximately 35.95 lakh children in the age group of 3-6 years attended preschool education regularly at the 1,19,481 Anganwadi Centres in the State. Continuous improvements have been made in Anganwadi infrastructure, service delivery to vulnerable children and mothers and streamlining of the supply-chain management of food items for the Anganwadi Centres.

Under Mission Vatsalya, the Department has housed over 5,388 children in Child Care Institutions. Children were also placed with adoptive families and supported through sponsorships. In 2023-24, 168 children were placed in adoption within the country, and 17 children outside the country. 1,109 sponsorships were provided during the year. 6,698 children were restored to their homes within the country, and 150 Bangladeshi and 10 Nepali children were repatriated to their home countries.

The Department runs 37 Shakti Sadan shelter homes for women in difficult circumstances, and 22 One Stop Centres for women affected by violence. There are 31 homes

for senior citizens, 10 homes for vagrants, and 34 shelter homes specifically for the urban homeless in Kolkata, Howrah and Asansol municipal areas. Further, the Department runs 2 half-way homes called 'Pratyay' which shelter persons who have recovered from mental illnesses until they are able to transition to independent living. The Department makes all efforts to re-unite shelter home residents with their families.

3.28 Minority Affairs & Madrasah Education

Under the 'Aikyashree Scholarship Scheme' more than 24 lakh scholarships have already been disbursed this year. Education loans to 1,290 meritorious students belonging to Minority Communities have been provided for pursuing Professional/Technical/Vocational courses.

To promote entrepreneurship and create opportunities for self employment, term loan and DLS (Micro Finance) are provided to individual entrepreneurs and Self-Help Groups. This year term loans have already been provided to 4,412 beneficiaries and Micro Finance has been extended to 45,133 members of SHGs. Total loan amount is Rs. 132.38 crore.

Under 3 major schemes/projects viz. SUP (Sankhyalaghu Unnayan Prakalpa), IMDP and MDW infrastructure development projects in minority

concentrated areas have been taken up. Under MSDP, Rs. 205.44 crore has been released in the current financial year. Rs. 42.30 crore has been released till date during 2023-24 under IMDP scheme to 32 blocks in 14 Districts whereas, under MDW scheme, more than Rs. 137 crore has been released in different blocks across all the 23 Districts of West Bengal.

This Department in collaboration with UNICEF & its academic partner Vikramshila Education Resource Society are continuing the Meena Manch (Girls Empowerment) Project, Financial Literacy Course, Quality Learning and Skill Development Programme, Career Guidance Programme covering 103 Madrasahs and about 50,000 students in the district of Murshidabad.

To enable better access to education for students of minority communities, 605 hostels attached to schools and colleges are being set up. Of these, 433 have already been operationalised. A maintenance grant of Rs. 10,000 per annum per student is also being provided for students availing hostel facilities.

In minority concentrated areas, construction of 305 Karmatirthas (Marketing Hub) have been taken up to provide marketing facilities for artisans, cultivators and also for improving self-employment opportunity for minority youths and SHG members. So far, 266 Karmatirtha have been made functional.

Parastatals under the Department like, the West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (WBMDFC), the Directorate of Madrasah Education (DME), the West Bengal State Haj Committee (WBSHC) and the West Bengal Urdu Academy (WBUA) through various interventions have provided coaching, counselling and career guidance to thousands of students.

The Aliah University under this Department has grown manifold in the past few years with 23 Academic Departments offering 50 Academic programmes. This year 122 students have qualified in NET/SET/GATE in various disciplines and 26 scholars have been awarded Ph.D degree by the University. 241 graduates of various disciplines of Aliah University have received offers for jobs in various sectors through Campus Placement drive.

Further interventions for minority development in the state like construction works at Aliah University, Boundary Walls around Graveyards, Rural Infrastructural Development Programme, English Medium Madrasahs, and vocational/skill development training, scheme for financial assistance to reputed NGOs for infrastructure development, housing for destitute women etc. have been taken up.

3.29 Backward Classes Welfare

All Sub-Divisions are now using online facility for issuing caste certificates. During 2023-24 financial year 10,05,933 [SC:6,01,799, ST: 1,97,929 & OBC: 2,06,205 (OBC-A: 99,355, OBC-B: 1,06,850)] Caste Certificates have been issued so far. Since May 2011, 1,60,99,758 Caste Certificates have been issued.

‘Taposili Bandhu’, a noble social pension scheme targeting all the 60 and 60+ persons of SC community, was initiated in April 2020, where the beneficiaries receive a monthly pension @ Rs. 1,000. Under this scheme, around 10,90,535 persons are getting monthly pension with a financial involvement of Rs. 777.58 crore (up to December 2023). Since 2020-21, total expenditure incurred under the said scheme amounts to Rs. 4,419.59 crore.

To achieve educational attainment to all SC students, right from Class V, totally state funded ‘Sikhshashree’ scholarship (V-VIII) is being disbursed from 2014-15 FY. During 2023-24 (as on 31/12/23), an amount of Rs. 79.50 crore has been allotted for awarding ‘Sikhshashree’ scholarship to 9,75,763 SC students.

During 2023-24, Rs. 47.50 crore and Rs. 17.77 crore have been allotted for Post-Matric Scholarship for SCs and Pre-Matric Scholarship for SCs respectively. Rs. 26.91 lakh and Rs. 33 lakh have also been disbursed

for giving Merit Scholarship to SC students reading in classes V-X & IX-XII respectively. This apart, an amount of Rs.12.04 crore has been allotted for giving hostel grants to SC students in 2023-24 (as on 31/12/23).

A new scholarship scheme, namely 'Medhasree'—Pre-Matric Scholarship to the OBC students studying in classes V-VIII, fully funded by the Government of West Bengal has been launched. During 2022-23, an amount of Rs. 24.01 crore has been released for giving 'Medhasree' Pre-Matric Scholarship to the OBC students.

Construction of 2 nos. 'Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Residential School' in Jalpaiguri & North 24-Parganas have been completed and already handed over to School Education Department.

Total 46 (Girls: 34, Boys: 12) central hostels under Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY) for SC students, 35 Central Hostels [SC:28 & Combined (SC&ST):7], 12 Central Hostels for OBC Boys & Girls and 97 Ashram Hostels for SCs are functional in the State of West Bengal.

'Sabooj Sathi'—one of the flagship schemes of the State Government, under which bicycles are provided free of cost to students of Class-IX in 8,828 Government Schools and Madrasahs with an objective to increase access to

high school education. Since 2015-16, around 1.15 crore students were benefited under the scheme. During 2023-24, 12.24 lakh students of class-IX (AY 2023) are being covered at a cost of Rs. 491.93 crore.

BCW Department has generated self-employment for around 41,848 youths belonging to targeted communities and has created employment linkage for another 20,900 youths through Skill Training during 2022-23. During 2023-24, it is targeted to cover around 65,000 target group beneficiaries under Self-employment schemes and Skill Development programme with financial involvement of Rs. 66 crore.

This Department runs a special pre-examination training programme for SC & ST students to prepare them for JEE/NEET/WBJEE entrance examination in 36 centres throughout the State. In 2023-2024 (as on 31/12/23), a total amount more than Rs. 4 crore for coaching fees of 1440 students has been incurred. After witnessing initial success, it has been decided to extend hours of training from existing 196 hrs to 320 hrs and Training Centres from existing 36 to 50. In the revamped scheme about 2,000 SC/ST Students will get benefit every year.

‘Dalit Bandhu Welfare & Development Board’ has been constituted for the welfare of Dalit Community & Safai Karmacharis. With inclusion of this new development board, the total Development & Cultural Boards has become 18 from 17 in 2023-24. More than Rs. 1.62 crore has been allotted for payment of wages to 'Dhakis' (Drummers of Bengal) pre-dominantly belonging to an ethnic group, engaged in 400 Blocks and Municipalities to popularize and disseminate the efforts and initiatives taken by this Department by beating their traditional drums at rural haats & various melas.

This Department administers implementation of the centrally sponsored scheme of ‘The SCs & the STs Prevention of Atrocities (POA)’ Act, 1989’ and ‘The Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955’. Inter Caste Marriage Incentives to 515 couples under ‘P.C.R. Act, 1955’ and monetary relief to 148 victims of atrocities under ‘POA Act, 1989’ have been provided.

3.30 Tribal Development

‘Sikhshashree’ Scholarship has been provided to 1,70,336 ST students of Class V-VIII till date. It is anticipated that more than 1.9 lakh students will be covered under the Scheme during 2023-24 for which an amount of Rs. 15.09 crore will be utilized.

7 nos. of Development and Cultural Boards are setup in the State for ensuring sustainable Development including preservation and promotion of traditional culture for Hill tribes and other STs of the State requiring special intervention. During 2023-24, Rs. 33.93 crore have been earmarked for the purpose for various schemes like construction of houses, community halls, youth hostels, drinking water sources, holding of cultural festival, etc.

Rs. 1,000 per month is provided to the poor ST persons with age of 60 years or above through 'Jai Johar' Old Age Pension Scheme rolled out from 01.04.2020. It is a universal scheme. In 2023-24, 3,00,410 beneficiaries got registered so far for which Rs. 245.99 crore has been utilized till date. It is anticipated that 3,05,000 beneficiaries will be covered at the end of the current fiscal.

Around 35,397 persons belonging to the ST community living in Jangal Mahal districts viz. Jhargram, Bankura, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur are covered under the Scheme 'Kendu Leaves Collectors Social Security Scheme 2015'. One - time assistance on attaining 60 years of age, financial support on accidental death, injury, maternity benefit, medical purpose are provided to the registered collectors. During 2023-24, 152 beneficiaries have received financial support to the tune of Rs. 92.80 lakh under this scheme.

10,307 ST ashram hostellers have been provided Rs. 9.94 crore for bedrolls, garments, furniture and meal charges. 19,501 Scheduled Tribes School attached hostellers have been provided Rs. 17.08 crore for meal charges. The monthly meal charges being received by hostellers has been increased from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,800 from January 2024.

Initiative has been taken to set up 3 Santali Medium Schools at Keshpur and Debra in Paschim Medinipur District and Gazole in Malda District. Construction work at Keshpur and Debra have already started and expected to be completed in the FY 2023-24. Another school being planned to be setup in Gazole.

3.31 Labour

The 'Bina Mulya Samajik Suraksha Yojana (BM-SSY)' has been implemented for the workers engaged in 61 unorganized sectors and also include Construction Workers and Transport Workers. Since inception Rs. 2,323.09 crore has been disbursed to 33,46,708 number of beneficiaries out of 1,63,61,443 number registered workers and Rs. 139.74 crore was disbursed to 35,052 number of Pensioners under this scheme.

The State Government had introduced a scheme called Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked Out Industries (FAWLOI) to provide Rs.1,500 per month per

beneficiary along-with an amount of Rs.1,500 as ex-gratia on Puja/Eid to jobless workers engaged in various Jute/ Other Industries of the State which suffer frequent lock out/suspension of work/closure. Financial benefit of Rs. 21.32 crore has been provided to 17,253 workers from 150 industrial units during 2023-24 (upto 31.12.2023).

‘West Bengal Migrant Workers’ Welfare Board’ has been constituted to address unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers of the State and implement its new scheme ‘West Bengal Migrant Workers’ Welfare Scheme, 2023’. For registration and facilitation of migrant workers, ‘Karmasathi Portal (<https://karmasathips.wblabour.gov.in>) and Mobile App [Karmasathi (Parijayee Shramik)]’ have been introduced where he/she must be a resident of West Bengal and must be ordinarily a worker who is employed/likely to be employed outside the State or the country. In case of death of the migrant worker, nominee will be provided with Rs. 50,000 in case of normal death, Rs. 2,00,000 in case of accidental death, Rs. 25,000 for repatriation of the dead body, Rs. 50,000 in case of 40% to 80% disability, Rs. 1,00,000 in case of more than 80% disability and Rs. 3,000 for cremation of dead body outside the State.

In the year 2023, the number of scheduled employments have been increased to 93 under the Minimum Wages Act and the rate of Monthly Minimum

Wages have been increased from Rs. 2,448 and 4,753 to Rs. 8,104 and 9,858 respectively.

The Employment Bank Portal has been integrated with other important portals of the State like *Samanya Portal*, *Bangla Sahayata Kendras*, *Karmobhumi Portal*, *Single Window Citizen Centric Portal*. In the financial year 2023-2024, total 57,167 job seekers & 319 employers have registered themselves in the portal. Since inception, total 40,74,468 job seekers and 2,107 employers have been enrolled in this Portal and they are availing the services of this portal.

State Government has taken multiple developments and relief measures to alleviate the problems of the tea garden workers with special focus on closed/abandoned/stressed tea gardens. 285 tea gardens are registered under the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, employing about 2.8 lakh workers.

Jute Industry provides employment to nearly 2.5 lakh workers with few thousands engaged in supporting services. There are 113 jute mills in West Bengal. The Department has initiated the process of providing the mill workers with photo identity cards.

Under 'Yuvashree', the State Government is providing unemployment assistance to 1 lakh job seekers registered in Employment Bank. Each of the selected job seekers is

paid a stipend of Rs. 1,500 per month under this scheme. 1,95,394 number of job seekers have been given benefit of 'Yuvashree' till now.

Labour Department through the Directorate of Employment has conducted various programmes like 'On-Site Training-cum-Engagement Programme on Jute', 'Data entry operator and front office management' for the dependants of tea garden workers, 'Skill development training' of domestic workers, 'Udiyaman Swanirbhar Karmasansthan Prakalpa', 'Self-employment awareness-cum-motivation camp', etc.

Total factories registered upto December, 2023 is 21,228. Employment of workers in the newly registered factories has increased by 20,111. From April to December, 2023, Rs. 5.26 crore has been collected as licence fees. The Directorate of Factories disbursed benefit to two number of beneficiaries of Rs. 0.06 crore in the scheme namely 'Silicosis Relief, Rehabilitation and Treatment Policy, West Bengal'. Total number of new boilers registered is 91, whereas 1,387 boilers are renewed.

ESI (MB) Scheme provides medical treatment in all 23 districts of West Bengal, to about 18,35,310 Insured Persons (IPs) (1 crore beneficiary) through 13 ESI hospitals (3,154 Beds), 86 Service Dispensaries & 106 Speciality tie-up hospitals. 2 new hospitals with 100 bed

capacity at Siliguri & Haldia have been operationalized and 50 bedded new hospital building at Asansol ESIH is going to be operationalized in end of March, 2024 and 10 bedded ICU has been constructed & operationalized in 5 State ESI Hospitals.

3.32 Self Help Group & Self Employment

West Bengal 'Swarojgar Sahayak Prakalpa (WBSSP)', provides interest subvention to the loans received by the SHGs with the primary objective of reducing the interest burden of the SHG to a meagre of 2 per cent. Rs. 30 crore have been provided to 1,00,659 SHGs as interest subvention under the 'West Bengal Swarojgar Sahayak Prakalpo (WBSSP)'.

'Swami Vivekananda Swanirbhar Karmasansthan Prakalpa'-a self-employment scheme is being implemented for promotion of tiny scale units of production, manufacturing, trade, service or any other sector including agro-based industries, floriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry other than direct agriculture.

To provide market linkage to the SHGs and Entrepreneurs, 22 District / Sub-District level 'Sabala Melas' and a 'State Sabala Mela' are being taken up. In FY 2023-24 the total outlay of Rs. 2.64 crore has been released for District / Sub-District level 'Sabala Melas'. 'Sabala Mela' in 2022-23 helped provide a platform to 128 Women SHGs, 60 SVSKP entrepreneurs and 46

individual artisans from across the State. 260 stalls (including Food Stalls) were set up to showcase the activities of SHGs / entrepreneurs at State level. This Department has also participated in 'India International Trade Fair (IITF)''-2023.

3.33 North Bengal Development

The North Bengal Development Department formulates and implements schemes for the comprehensive & holistic development of the 8 districts of North Bengal. The schemes undertaken by the Department covers sectors like Rural as well as Urban Infrastructure, Roads, Bridges, Culverts, Haats & Markets, Health, Higher and Technical Education, Non-Conventional Solar Energy, Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage, Minor Irrigation, Flood Protection, Women and Child Development, Sports, Tourism etc.

The Department has completed 2,716 notable schemes up to 31st December, 2023 in 8 districts of North Bengal region since its inception in the year 2011-12 and many projects are in different stages of completion.

Some notable projects being implemented by the department are construction of RCC Bridge over Jorai River near Volka High School between Volka-I G.P. & Volka-II G.P. under Kumargram Block. (Span: 39 Mtr and 240 Mtr) in Alipurduar District, construction of 3 New

Boys' Hostel (G+3) in the premises of Cooch Behar Government Engineering College in Cooch Behar District, construction of Paver Block Road from School Dangi to Lalpool via Sebdulla Dam Hatighisha G.P., Naxalbari Block in Darjeeling district, construction of Jai Hind Community Hall in Kalimpong District, construction of Haat Shed in Ground Floor and Yatri Entry Shed on first floor along with renovation of Ticket Counter at the Temple premises of Jalpeshwar Shiv Temple, Maynaguri Block in Jalpaiguri district and construction of many roads in the districts to improve connectivity in the rural area.

3.34 Sunderban Affairs

The activities of the Department is centred around the development of infrastructure and livelihood programmes in Sundarbans region.

During 2023-24, constructions of important Bridges and Jetty have been completed viz., construction of R.C.C. Bridge over river Chunkuri in Namkhana, construction of R.C.C. Bridge (Ganga Setu) over Gobadia Branch Canal in Patharpratima, construction of R.C.C. Jetty at Bouthakurani sluiceway ghat over river Dansa, in Sandeshkhali-II.

During 2023-24, constructions of 64.22 km road, 16.63 km Brick paved road, 46.75 km Concrete road, 0.84 km Bituminous road have been completed.

Construction of 2 bridges have also been completed. Works of another 10 bridges are going on.

Agricultural implements having 8,900 Battery Operated Knapsack Sprayers and 3,500 Shed Net have been distributed to 12,400 beneficiaries in Sundarban region. Distributions of IMC Fingerlings and Fish Feed to 30,000 beneficiaries have been completed in Sundarban region.

Creation of Mangroves and Jhaw Plantations over 580 hectares (Mangrove-410 hectares and Jhaw-170 hectares) have been completed in Sundarban Region.

‘Sundarban Divas’ has been observed on 11th December, 2023 in all the 19 blocks under Sundarban Region for creation of awareness among the people of the region regarding conservation of the bio-diversity and environment of the region.

3.35 Paschimanchal Unnayan

Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs Department (PUAD) has been created for bridging critical gaps for the upliftment of the downtrodden people living in the Western part of the State predominantly inhabited by SC & ST population by way of implementing infrastructure development projects, livelihood projects. These are like organizing cultural events like ‘Jungle Mahal Utsav’ for

showcasing the cultural heritage of the tribals. The jurisdiction of Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs Department covers 7 Districts spreading over 12,558 villages in 74 Blocks and 648 Gram Panchayats covering an area of about 22.28 lakh hectares.

The Department has facilitated commercial poultry layer farms with the help of ARD Department at Salbani, Paschim Medinipur with 3 lakh layer birds for production of 945 lakh eggs per annum and Gobindapur, Purulia with 2.4 lakh layers birds for production of 756 lakh eggs per annum respectively at a project cost of Rs. 75 crore.

For ensuring supply of drinking water, 500 submersible pumps (PWSS) have been set up in 10 Blocks of Purulia District with the help of Public Health Engineering Department at a project cost of Rs. 48 crore.

The Department has undertaken development of Kanak Durga Mandir, Chilkigarh Bio-diversity site, Jhargram at a project cost of Rs. 2 crore.

The Department is implementing projects related to construction of concrete roads, drains, market complex, schools & other buildings, micro irrigation, re-excavation of ponds, storage of water, supply of drinking water in convergence with other State Government line departments.

Governance

3.36 Home & Hill Affairs

Law and order scenario in the State has witnessed a remarkable change since 2011. The allout efforts of the State Government machinery has helped in achieving a stable situation where the rights of citizen of this State are secured.

The State Government has taken necessary steps with a view to strengthen Police Administration viz. procurement of State-of-the-Art equipment, vehicles for faster mobility, modern arms and ammunitions, improved communication network.

State Police Administration has been revamped by creating a new division namely 'Bhangar Division' under Kolkata Police and 9 new Police Stations including 1 Women Police Station have been created under this Division.

For better traffic management in the city of Kolkata, various measures like installation of CCTV, RLVD & ANPR cameras, breathe alcohol analyser machine, speed laser gun, stop line lights etc. have been taken up which have resulted into reduction in fatal traffic accidents. The 'Safe Drive Save Life' campaigning has reduced the road accident throughout the State remarkably.

With a vision to develop physical infrastructure, construction of G+6 storied combined Administrative Building at Barrackpore Armed Police Brigade has been completed with an approved estimated cost of Rs. 20.54 crore. Administrative Building at SAP 11th Battalion, Chharrah in Purulia District, Model Urban Police Station at Uluberia in Howrah, Model Semi-Urban Police Station at Noapara in Barrackpore Police Commissionerate, Model Rural Police Station at Pulbazar in Darjeeling District, Model Rural Police Station at Mathurapur in Sundarban Police District etc. have been completed.

Forensic Science Laboratory, Kolkata has been upgraded to ensure speedy and smooth disposal of cases.

The hill areas of the State continue to witness several initiatives for overall development in the region. Construction of Marybong High School is in progress. Infrastructure development of Vidyasagar Higher Secondary School at Bijanbari and new school building of Dalgaon MSK School are nearing completion. For providing connectivity to the remotest village, a new scheme for upgradation, carpeting road from Suren Fatak to lower Chuikhim Chunabhatti gaon is completed. A new scheme for strengthening of embankment from flood and erosion of River Rakti at Painakumari Jote, Kurseong has been completed.

3.37 Personnel and Administrative Reforms

Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department besides service matters of the State Government employees looks after e-governance initiatives of the State Government and Bangla Sahayata Kendra Scheme which provides facilitation for speedy access to various Government Services and entitlements.

3,561 Bangla Sahayata Kendras (BSKs) are providing 283 online Government Services related to 40 State Government Departments completely free of cost across the State. About 12 crore services have so far been delivered to more than 6.50 crore people. e-wallet transactions of major utility bill payments such as electricity bill, stamp duty registration bill, land mutation bills worth Rs. 228 crore have so far been completed successfully through BSKs. Setting up another 1,461 BSKs is under active consideration of the Government.

e-District 2.0 version has been introduced for high performance and provided benefits to 28 lakh citizens through 150 online e-services in e-District portal this year. The Department has developed e-applications of different Departments/ organisations like SARAI, ITFMS for Police Commissionerates, Puja Permission, Apon Bangla etc. for which it received the 19th CSI SIG award of appreciation

under State Category and 4th Digital Transformation Award for WhatsApp Bot.

Satyendranath Tagore Civil Services Study Centre under Centre for Excellence in Public Management (CEPM), a noble initiative of the State, provides quality coaching-cum-guidance to the young aspirants of West Bengal appearing in Civil Services Examination conducted by the UPSC.

With a view to providing better office infrastructure the Government has undertaken construction of new Administrative Building for DM, Paschim Bardhaman and also for Jhalda, Manbazar and Haldia Sub-Divisions. Construction of new Administrative Buildings of SDO, Durgapur and SDO, Chanchol have been completed during the year.

3.38 Disaster Management & Civil Defence

The Department of Disaster Management and Civil Defence is tasked with calamity crisis & risk management, by way of preparedness, mitigation and prevention, which inter-alia includes awareness generation, preparation of Disaster Management plans at all levels, training of the members of the community, elected members of three-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions, State Government officials and members of Non Government Organizations.

The State Disaster Master Plan (DM Plan) has been prepared with an aim to tackle natural disasters with a scientific approach taking into consideration the population, rapid urbanization, increasing industrialization, environmental degradation, climate change, state and national security, economy and sustainable development.

The State Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) has been functioning 24×7 for 365 days, District EOCs are also operational round the clock and a Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) for dissemination of information to all major Alert Generating Agencies has been put in place. Extension of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) is also set up to provide a unified platform for reception & handling all emergency requests related to disaster events.

221 Multipurpose Cyclone Shelters are operational in the State out of which 146 shelters have been constructed under NCRMP-II.

Mock drills on flood, earthquake and cyclone are regularly conducted in selected blocks of all districts. Mock drills were organized also on Chemical & Industrial Hazard. District Administration, NDRF, SDRF, Civil Defence, Fire Deptt, Police, Industries and other stakeholders were involved in those mock drills. During Financial Year 2023-24 (up to Dec'23) 307 nos. of mock drill have been completed.

The Department has established one Research Chair in the name of Swami Vivekananda for the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University (RKMVU), Belur Math, Howrah.

In the FY 2023-24 the up-scaling of 'Aapada Mitra Scheme' has been implemented under which a pool of 7,300 community volunteers have been trained and equipped with emergency responder kit and other essential basic equipments to attend disaster management related activities like QRT, Rescue, crowd management etc.

Civil Defence Volunteers play an important role in management of Ganga Sagar Mela and perform duties as DERT (District Emergency Response Team), Sagarbandhu (COVID), Sagar Sahayak, DRMP, AAPADA MITRA, Divers etc.

In the district of South 24 Parganas, Bankura and Purulia, QRT Buildings have been made functional, 2 more in the district of Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur have been nearly completed. Multi-purpose Rescue Centre has been completed at Darjeeling district while another is under construction in Kalimpong. Civil Defence Rescue Centre at Mohanpur (Paschim Medinipur), Basirhat (North 24 Parganas) and Pursurah (Hooghly) have been started functioning. An integrated communication set-up has been stabilised by HF system amongst all CDRVs, three Sub-Areas and headquarters under Kolkata Civil Defence Organisation.

As a part of ongoing innovation and use of IT tools in disaster management, a Web Based Incident Response Software (Previstar CPS) is being put in place at the EOC for better management of disasters by real time analysis of data. All 23 Districts have been covered in this project. An Enterprise GIS solution with a Mobile Data Collection System has also been developed where data collection from field level will be done through hand held smart devices.

3.39 Fire and Emergency Services

The Department has taken a number of steps for development of fire fighting arrangements throughout the State by means of setting up new fire stations at different vulnerable places, procuring many appropriate fire tender and fire equipments etc. The procurement of ultramodern equipment will help in capacity building of the fire fighters and generating awareness among the citizens.

During this financial year the Department with the help of Public Works Department and KMDA has completed the fire stations at Panskura, Sonamukhi, Birati, Sabong and Garhbeta. Fire stations at Lake Town, Deganga, Jangipur, Dubrajpur and Dainhat are under construction. Construction of the new building (G+3) of Howrah Fire Station has already been completed and

operationalized. Total number of Fire Stations will be increased from 109 in 2011-12 to 160 by this financial year.

Procurement of firefighting equipment and fire tenders is most essential for rendering services. During 2023-24 procurement of Self Standing Monitor, Smart Nozzle Low Discharge (FN 40S), Battery Charger, Chain Saw (Wood), Fire bikes with Mist Technology, BA Set Compressor (Static) etc has been undertaken.

1,912 programmes on Fire Safety Awareness were conducted at Schools, Colleges, Hospitals and Nursing Homes, Shopping Malls, Office Buildings, Clubs, Puja Pandels etc. throughout the State by several units of West Bengal Fire & Emergency Services.

The Department has already promulgated the system of online issuance of Fire Safety Recommendation/Fire Safety Certificate (NOC)/Revised FSR/Fire License and their renewals. During 2023-24 (from 01.04.2023-31.12.2023), the department has issued 1,125 Fire Safety Certificate, 2,468 Fire Safety Recommendations, 230 Revised Fire Safety Recommendation and renewed 1,237 Fire Safety Certificates. In addition to that 4,289 Fire License have been granted and 14,786 have been renewed. 2,288 fire audit has been conducted in the vulnerable buildings.

The Department of Fire & Emergency Services has introduced many reforms under Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) for ease of doing business (EoDB) including introduction of e-services, rationalization of fees and integration of online services of the department with Silpasathi Portal.

3.40 Correctional Administration

The Department has undertaken various schemes for upgradation of infrastructure of existing capacity of the Correctional Homes and also construction of new Correctional Homes.

A major part of the project, the construction of a new Central Correctional Home at Baruipur, South 24 Parganas with an administrative approval of Rs. 177.44 crore has already been completed. A total fund of Rs. 129.98 crore has been utilized for the purpose. The project is expected to be completed in the financial year 2024-25.

Construction of a new Correctional Home in Baruipur for shifting inmates of the Presidency Correctional Home with an administrative approval of Rs. 177.99 crore is in progress and a total fund of Rs. 71.45 crore has been utilized for the purpose. The project is expected to be completed in the financial year 2024-25.

The construction of a new Sub-Correctional Home at Chanchal at Malda, at a total expenditure of Rs. 31.10 crore,

has been completed in FY 2023-24 and correctional home at Nimtori is likely to be completed in 2024-25.

Construction of quarters for Officers and Staff of Presidency Correctional Home at Baruipur, South 24 Parganas, at an estimated project cost of Rs. 41.20 crore is under progress and a total fund of Rs. 20.17 crore has been utilized.

Construction work of the 3-storied (G+2) office building of DIG (Baruipur Range) along with allied works at an estimated project cost of Rs. 2.80 crore at the Presidency Correctional Home Complex of Baruipur, South 24 Parganas is under progress.

Construction of a Safe Home for the accommodation of all released Foreign National inmates and other allied works at a project cost of Rs. 3.32 crore have been started at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas.

Construction of a double-storied building for the accommodation of 100 inmates at Kalyani Subsidiary Correctional Home at an estimated project cost of Rs. 1.57 crore is in progress.

Installation of Towers of Harmonious Call Blocking System (T-HCBS) have been taken up in Baruipur Central Correctional Home and Berhampore Central Correctional Home and X-Ray baggage scanners are being installed in 14 different Correctional Homes.

Total 2,10,743 people have been registered in 'Visitors Management System' (VMS) module to avail the facility of interacting with their family members lodged in the Correctional Homes.

Facility of virtual communication between the inmates and their family members have been provided through e-Mulakat module and a total of 8,342 inmates have already been benefited.

16,059 inmates have been virtually produced before the Court and provided hearing by utilizing the facility of e-Court.

3.41 Planning and Statistics

During 2023-24, under the flagship 'Duare Sarkar' initiative of the Government, 3 phases were organized (Phase-VI: 1st April, 2023 to 30th April, 2023, Phase-VII: 1st September, 2023 to 30th September, 2023 and Phase-VIII: 15th December, 2023 to 30th December, 2023). The number of schemes/services brought under Duare Sarkar has grown three times from 12 in Phase-I to 36 in Phase-VIII. Till Phase-VIII (upto 31.12.2023) of Duare Sarkar, 6.68 lakh camps have been organized which have witnessed footprints of 11.40 crore visitors. In these eight phases of Duare Sarkar (upto 31.12.2023), more than 9.90 crore applications have been received, out of which 8.78 crore services have already been delivered.

Through Paray Samadhan, the Government seeks to address neighbourhood needs through small interventions and community participation, aiming to solve community level issues locally. In 8 phases of Paray Samadhan (till 31.12.2023), total 66,368 number of schemes have been sanctioned, out of which 47,130 schemes have been completed.

The State Spatial Data Centre (SSDC) is functioning to cater the Geographical Information System (GIS) related needs of various line departments of the State by utilising the manpower and maps/data/layers available with the District Spatial Data Centres (DSDCs, formerly NRDMS). During 2023-24, development of web-portal for 'GIS mapping of Industrial and Economic Corridors' and 'GIS mapping of Tea Gardens' has also been undertaken.

During the 17th Assembly (2021-26), so far more than 7,454 schemes have been sanctioned under 'Bidhayak Elaka Unnayan Prakalpa (BEUP)' and total Rs. 378.50 crore was released to districts and Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC).

Under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), during the period of 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24), Rs. 339 crore has been received and Rs. 270.64 crore has been utilized till 31.12.2023. For the sitting Rajya Sabha MPs, Rs. 144.01 crore has been utilized till 31.12.2023.

During FY 2023-24, the State Public Policy and Planning Board (SPPPB) is entrusted to take up the issues of NITI Aayog activities like Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP), State Indicator Framework (SIF), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) etc. State Human Development Report (SHDR) is under preparation.

The regular works of the Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics (BAE&S) are determination of yield rate and total production of 19 crops, preparation of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), District Domestic Product (DDP), Index of Industrial Production (IIP), Consumer Price Index (CPI) etc.

3.42 Science and Technology and Biotechnology

Department of Science and Technology and Biotechnology, is presently supporting 281 research & development projects during the FY 2023-24 and 386 projects are in the pipeline for consideration.

In Biotechnology sector different initiatives for promoting industrial biotechnology ventures, supporting start-ups for incubation etc. are being taken up through establishment of Kolkata Biotech Park. Collaboration with other Government Departments like Food Processing & Horticulture, Environment has also been taken up.

Furthermore, two programs namely RISE (Research Internship in Biotechnological Based-Science and Engineering) and BOOST (Biotechnology based Opportunities Offered to Science & Technology Development) are being re-introduced in the current FY and are expected to positively impact the Biotechnology scenario, specially the HR side of the State.

This Department has a thriving Remote Sensing and GIS setup which provides necessary technical inputs to different Departments of Government and also collaborates with ISRO. Professional Courses on Remote Sensing are also regularly provided both for Government and non-government partners.

As the nodal Department for Patenting and GI Registration, 70 patents and 18 GI certificates have been granted through Patent Information centre of this Department. In the present year 22 patents have been filed and 12 has already been granted. A professional course on Intellectual Property Rights has also been introduced.

Under the Jagadish Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS) programme, the Department provides scholarship support to 50 students in each category for 'Senior Talent Search Test' and 'Senior Bigyani Kanya Medha Britti Program'. Additionally under the 'Junior

Talent Search Test’ & ‘Junior Bigyani Kanya Medha Britti’ program, 250 science students (+2 level) of different districts are also provided with scholarships for pursuing studies in science at under-graduate level.

The Department also organises the Science & Technology Congress at Regional and State level with partner institutes (in the Districts) to provide a forum to the Scientists/Researchers for interaction, deliberation on scientific papers of different disciplines, disseminating innovative ideas for overall advancement and popularisation of Science & Technologies in the State.

Financial support is also provided to the researchers/ scholars in the form of Research Fellowship to pursue Doctorate degree and to the working scientists/ science faculty members through Research Grant Awards. The Department also recognizes outstanding contributions in popularising science within the masses by awarding individuals and voluntary organizations through State Awards in three categories.

3.43 Environment

The Environment Department is actively engaged in improvement of environment, prevention and control of pollution, conservation and development of biodiversity and ecosystems, implementation of policies regarding environment in the State. The Department operates

through a number of autonomous organizations such as the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, West Bengal Biodiversity Board, East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, Institute of Environmental Studies and Wetland Management, West Bengal Coastal Zone Management Authority, State Environment Impact Assessment Authority, State Wetlands Authority.

The Department has set up 3 ‘Saal Leaf’ plate and bowl manufacturing units in tribal areas in Bankura to avoid use of single use plastic items and has also set up 5 Biodiversity parks, 4 Butterfly Gardens and 4 ‘Avoy Pukur’ to conserve indigenous fish species and has notified 2 new Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS). Now the State has the highest number of BHS (10) in the country.

The Department has taken steps to conserve rare traditional crop varieties of rice (Lakshisaal, Danaguri, Kabirajsaal, Karpurkranti) and vegetables through community participation at 5 places in different agro-climatic zones with market support.

The Department has developed a Biodiversity Information System on digital platform and prepared Biodiversity Map of West Bengal depicting important flora, fauna and ethnic communities through ‘Patachitra’.

An Integrated Management Plan (2021-2026) for East Kolkata Wetlands has been prepared.

Revision of the West Bengal State Action Plan on Climate Change and preparation of Clean Air Action Plan for Kolkata Metropolitan Area has been almost completed.

The WBPCB regularly monitored Ambient Air Quality at 83 locations and 15 Continuous Automatic Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AAQMs) measuring air pollutants in real time round the clock, out of which 1 AAQM station is installed in 2023. Additional 4 AAQMs are under commissioning stage.

Around 560 smokeless chullah have been distributed among road side eateries in 3 non-attainment cities to replace wood and coal based chullah.

WBPCB has set up a testing centre cum laboratory at Haldia with NEERI for obtaining NEERI certification on green cracker.

The WBPCB is installing 17 rooftop SPV power plants in different schools/institutions and has taken steps for management of Fresh Solid Waste through Composting, Bio-machination and Material Recovery Facility.

Geo-tagging of 8,911 wetlands of the State having area of 2.25 hectares and above is completed. Brief documents of 70 wetlands have been prepared. GIS mapping of 5 Wetlands is in process. Waterlogged area of Dankuni in Hooghly has also been GIS mapped.

Industry : Small, Medium and Large

3.44 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Textiles

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sector is a major contributor to the State's economy and has enormous potential for generating ample employment opportunities besides significant share in industrial output and exports of the State. To foster the growth and development of MSMEs, the Government of West Bengal has been implementing various schemes and programmes with special focus on addressing the bottlenecks that hinder the development of MSMEs. It has not only addressed the issues of infrastructure, timely finance, technology, skilling, marketing, incentivization of MSMEs but has also ensured creation of an enabling business environment under the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) initiatives.

In an effort to formalize MSMEs, over 3,55,700 enterprises have come under registration fold during April-December 2023 which is almost double compared to the corresponding period of the last financial year.

Credit disbursement in MSME has increased by Rs. 18,345 crore in absolute term as on 30.09.2023 from Rs. 70,658 crore as on 30.09.2022 thus registering a positive growth of 25.96% on Y-O-Y basis.

For sustainable development of micro and small enterprises, 4 common facility centers have been operationalized and 11 CFC/CPC for khadi & village industries projects including khadi production unit & stalls have been established under cluster development approach.

Under 'Bhabishyat Credit Card' scheme, nearly 20,000 youth have been given financial assistance involving Rs. 426 crore.

West Bengal Textile Incentive Scheme has been modified by widening the coverage for the existing units in textile sector for expansion activities and offering attractive incentives for handloom sector and for the early movers in each segment of power textiles (except garmenting). In 2023 up to the month of December, total 426 new hi-speed modern powerlooms have been installed by power textile units involving Rs. 368 crore out of which 278 looms have started production of fabric for school uniform project. Till December 2023 in the FY 2023-24, over two crore meters of fabrics have been procured by Tantuja from the state based power textile units under the School Uniform Project of the State Government. Now the entire requirement of around five crore meter of fabric for the school uniforms is being manufactured by the state based powerlooms.

In the Handloom sector, Mega Handloom Cluster in Purba Bardhaman district has been taken up with a sanctioned amount of Rs. 34.32 crore involving more than 20,000 handloom weavers and allied workers. One more Mega Handloom Cluster in Nadia and Nine Block Level Clusters are in the pipeline. Besides, one Regional Design Centre on Baluchari weaving has been set up at the K.G. Engineering College, Bishnupur where certificate course on Baluchari Weaving is being taken up in collaboration with Government College of Engineering & Textile Technology, Berhampore (GCETTB) for providing marketing, packaging insights to Baluchari weavers along with technical inputs.

In garment sector, 35 Readymade Garment cluster cooperatives have been formed in addition to existing cluster cooperatives and financial assistance has been provided for production of garments especially school uniform.

To showcase all hand-woven sarees including traditional sarees of Bengal under one umbrella, the Brand 'Banglar Saree' has been created within the ambit of Tantuja. The object is to make available Banglar Sarees to all women at affordable cost and to make the 'Banglar Saree' nationally recognized. So far, four showrooms have been opened, two in Kolkata (Daksinapan and

Dhonodhanyo), one at New Digha in Purba Medinipur and another one at Banga Bhawan, New Delhi. More than 3,000 weavers and artisans have been benefited under this initiative and 1.30 lakh additional man-days have been generated within a span of only 3 months.

To promote manufacturing, storage & selling of green firecrackers in the state, seven parcels of government land (three for manufacturing and four for selling) have been identified for green firecracker clusters and more than 1800 licenses for selling/manufacturing of green firecrackers have been issued through the revamped *Silpasathi* single window portal. Further, 'West Bengal Green Firecracker Manufacturing, Storage and Selling Scheme' has been notified with provisions of State assistance regarding to identification of land, financial support to the SPV for creating common infrastructure besides schematic support to the individual units. So far, three projects in Howrah, Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas have been approved under this scheme with an estimated financial outlay of Rs. 3.5 crore.

To reach out to the doorstep of the entrepreneurs in the nook & corner of the State, Shilper Samadhane-MSME Camps were organised from 1st August, 2023 to 18th August, 2023 in each Block/Municipality/Corporation area of the State wherein more than 4,24,600

entrepreneurs attended in 2,407 camps. With special emphasis on industrial development in North Bengal, North Bengal Business Meet 2023 was organized on 7th December, 2023 at Siliguri involving 16 departments.

Environment Clearance (EC) has been obtained for the Project for Expansion of Calcutta Leather Complex (CLC). Up-gradation & Refurbishment of Effluent Transportation System (ETS) have been started. Other ongoing projects include Storm Water Drainage, Secured Land Fill (SLF) Site, Rehabilitation of Micro Tanners, Core Infrastructure of Footwear Park etc.

A Modernized Textile Haat having G+5 storied building has been established at Jaigachi under Habra Municipality in North 24 Parganas district. This permanent market complex will provide direct benefit to 2,500 textile traders besides indirect benefit to thousands of people associated with this business. Development of infrastructure of Singur Agro Industrial Park, Hooghly and Integrated Textile Park at Banipur, North 24 Parganas has been completed. Another two infrastructure projects viz. Jaiganon Industrial Park at Alipurduar and Phase-II of Bolpur Industrial Park at Birbhum has also been completed.

Under Scheme for Approved Industrial Park (SAIP) 2020 scheme, total 44 proposals have been received from private developers to set up industrial parks, out of which final

and in-principle approvals have been accorded to 15 and 23 proposals respectively involving an area of about 1,607 acre.

Under SIDBI Cluster Development Fund, 25 infrastructure projects have been sanctioned involving Rs. 164.40 crore out of which 12 projects are ongoing with an estimated project cost of Rs. 126 crore. Another seven projects with project amount of Rs. 31.47 crore are in the pipeline.

Institutional support for marketing has been extended to the MSEs, artisans and weavers through the parastatals of MSME & Textiles Department. Up to December 2023, the combined business turnover of Tantuja, Manjusha, Paschim Banga Resham Shilpi, Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation and Bangasree has been recorded at around Rs. 350 crore. To expand business, Manjusha has opened a new Emporium at Machantala in Bankura. 31 fairs have been organized so far in this financial year, across the state, generating total business of Rs. 277.77 crore for MSMEs.

To address the issue of delayed payment of Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs), two regional West Bengal Micro & Small Enterprises Facilitation Councils (WBMSEFC) have been set up; one at Siliguri and another at Durgapur.

The three WBMSEFCs, have together settled & disposed of 296 cases amounting to Rs. 44.09 crore.

Under Ease of Doing Business, 109 business centric services are made available in the revamped State Single Window (*Silpashati*) Portal. Over 3.43 lakh statutory applications have been submitted by nearly 1.82 lakh registered users through this portal and the disposal rate is around 95%. Over 900 burdensome compliances have been reduced so far. Further, an Online Grievance Redressal System has also been developed for Industry / Business including setting up of Call Centre. The state EoDB cell under this department has also been working on services leading to Ease of Living. So far, around 15 services have been brought under the e-district portal while over 29 services/certificates are now integrated with the Digilocker system under the aegis of Banglar i-cloud.

3.45 Industry, Commerce & Enterprises

Under Sand Mining Policy, 2021 and Sand Mining Rules, West Bengal Mineral Development and Trading Corporation Ltd. (WBMDTCL) has so far floated auctions for sand mine blocks in 7 different phases for selection of Mine Developer & Operator (MDO) from the empanelled MDOs. Tenders for 8th phase of auctions have been floated. These auctions shall cover all expiring mines up to March 2024.

Revised mining plan for Gourangdih ABC coal mine has been approved. After obtaining the statutory clearances (EC & FC) from Government of India, the scheduled coal production, as per the Mine Plan, from the Gourangdih ABC coal mine is expected to be started early 2024.

New mining policy for Raiyati Lands has been notified to ensure livelihood opportunities in a scientific and sustainable manner to a large number of people associated with the processing, transportation and multiple other ancillary activities of mining of minor minerals in the district of Bankura, Purulia and Birbhum. 87 LOIs have been issued so far by the WBMDTCL. These mines are expected to be operational within the Financial Year 2024-25.

Dredging/de-silting operations have been carried out to upkeep the health of the rivers, especially in the rainy season and arrest natural disaster. A unique volume sharing model has been adopted where no cost is borne from the Government exchequer for the dredging/de-silting operations carried out by WBMDTCL and moreover, there is gain for Government due to sharing of dredged/de-silted materials.

WBIDC and WBIIDC have allotted land to prospective industrial units in designated industrial parks. WBIIDC has completed digital survey of all industrial parks under

its management. The 'Unit Level Data Visualisation (ULOV)' software developed by the WBIIDC to monitor the performance of each industrial unit in different industrial parks under WBIIDC has been successfully launched.

The State Government has successfully organized the 7th edition of Bengal Global Business Summit on November 21-22 in 2023 in Kolkata with WBIIDC as the nodal agency. This event was attended by over 400 International delegates from Europe, UK, CIS, SAARC, Middle East, Africa, ASEAN, LAC, Central & East Asia and several other regions. 17 partner countries like Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, France, Germany, Fiji, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, South Korea and the UK joined the Summit. BGBS, 2023 received a participation of business and official delegations from around 40 countries.

State Government has introduced many new policies towards giving impetus to industrial and infrastructure resurgence in the State. These policies include — The West Bengal Export Promotion Policy, 2023 to develop the State as the 'Global Trading Hub of India' by creating State of the Art trading infrastructure driving exports; The West Bengal logistics Policy' 2023 to streamline the logistics sector enabling industrial boost in the State with

special emphasis to promote green logistics and shall remain in force for a period of next 5 years; The Industrial and Economic Corridor Policy, 2023 to identify economic zones/nodes across the important highways to develop the adjoining areas as industrial and business corridors and The West Bengal New and Renewable Energy Manufacturing Promotion Policy, 2023 to encourage large scale industries to invest in the renewable energy sector with an ultimate goal to address the energy supply gaps through incentivizing the investors.

The Tea Tourism and Allied Business Policy, 2019 aims at promoting eco-friendly tourism in the unutilized and fallow tea garden lands in North Bengal. The Department of ICE has accorded approval to 5 such projects at 4 tea gardens generating investment to the tune of Rs. 316.45 crore.

14 Industrial Parks, 4 under WBIDC and 10 under WBIIDC have been identified to conduct Skill Development Programme under Utkarsha Bangla Scheme for promotion of employment opportunities to the youth.

Registrar of Firms, Societies and Non-Trading Corporations has implemented a new web portal for easy access under Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) for online registration of Partnership Firms.

City Gas Distribution (CGD) network is an interconnected system of underground Natural Gas pipelines for supplying Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for domestic, commercial and industrial use. Bengal Gas Company Ltd. (BGCL) is operating 10 CNG stations in and around Kolkata and has already laid 78 km steel pipeline and about 155 km MDPE pipelines within KMDA and HIDCO area. This has put West Bengal on the gas pipeline map of India. After completion of the pipeline laying work, the State is likely to get cooking fuel at cheaper rate than LPG and CNG.

Under CGD work, 565 km pipeline has already been commissioned out of 795 km targeted length. Total projected investment for the work is around Rs. 5,300 crore which may result into direct and indirect employment generation of 17 lakh man-days during construction. The project will provide gas service to the households and also to the industrial and transport sectors.

3.46 Public Enterprises and Industrial Reconstruction

Saraswaty Press Ltd. (SPL), a Government of West Bengal Enterprise, is under the administrative control of PE&IR Department. SPL is one of the largest printing company in India. This is an ISO 9001:2015 Company and empaneled with Indian Bank Association as security printer. SPL is also the leader in Eastern India for security

& confidential printing, school text book printing, printing of hologram etc. It's subsidiary company is West Bengal Text Book Corporation Ltd. (WBTBCL).

West Bengal Text Book Corporation Ltd. (WBTBCL) printed approximately 11 crore books and 3.72 crore khata. There are approximately 661 different types of books. These are being distributed to nearly 3,888 locations in West Bengal. SPL has been entrusted this year with printing of Voter ID Cards, Ration Cards, Student Credit Cards, Registers & Forms, Hospital Stationeries like OPD tickets & Bed Head tickets, Excise Holograms, Security Forms, Cheques, Forms & Reports for various Government Department and Statutory bodies, Kolkata Gazettes Part-I-Gazette Notifications, Gazette Part-II which includes change of name, surname, religion, gender including notification from the PSUs and Gazettes Part-III-Ordinances, Part-IIIA-Acts and Part-IV-Bills. The official Calendar of the Government of West Bengal is printed by Saraswaty Press Ltd.

PE & IR Department has developed a web-based 'Loan Management System (LMS)' in consultation with Finance Department & Accountant General, West Bengal (AG, WB). The software system aims to provide real time review of loan position by PE&IR, Finance Department, AG, WB

and the company itself. It is being integrated with GRIPS to facilitate online payment of dues and subsequent issuance of NOC, thereby providing seamless service to the loanee companies.

Services

3.47 Tourism

State witnessed a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.9 % from 2011 to 2022 (post covid) in tourist footfall to reach 89 million. West Bengal ranked 3rd in foreign tourist footfall and 8th in domestic tourist footfall in 2022 (Source: Report, 2023 of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India).

UNESCO has inscribed Durga Puja in Kolkata on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 15th December 2021. This is the first festival in Asia to receive the 'UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.

During the 45th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Riyadh, Santiniketan of West Bengal has been inscribed on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. Santiniketan is India's 41st UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Tourism Department has taken an initiative for registration and promotion of Homestays in West Bengal. 'West Bengal Homestay Tourism Policy, 2017' (amended in 2019) and West Bengal Homestay Tourism Policy 2022

are in vogue with the objective to standardize homestay service and are important driver for equitable growth and prosperity offering an alternative source of livelihood, development and growth in remote locations, preservation of local skills and enterprise development at the micro level. An incentive of Rs. 1 lakh is provided to the owner of Homestay in two equal instalments under 'West Bengal Homestay Tourism Policy, 2022' and the clearance issue has also been simplified.

Since introduction of this policy, total 2,340 Homestays (as on 31.12.2023) have been registered generating 18,720 employments (direct employment-11,700 and indirect employment- 7,020). Total 5,132 homestays are currently operating in West Bengal under the aegis of Tourism Department, Tribal Development Department and Forest Department. West Bengal is one of the leading states for homestays in India.

The Kiriteshwari village in Murshidabad District in West Bengal has been chosen as the best tourism village in India in 'Best Tourism Village Competition', 2023 by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

To exploit the tourism potential of the State and encourage private sector participation, West Bengal Homestay Tourism Policy, 2022, West Bengal Tourism Policy, 2019, Tourism Incentive Scheme 2015 (amended

in 2021), Recognition of Tourism Service Providers of West Bengal, 2021 (Amendment to Recognition of Tourism Service Providers Scheme, 2023), West Bengal Tourist Guide (WBTG) Certification Scheme, 2021 and Tourism Service Provider Capacity Building Scheme, 2023 have been introduced.

The landmark decision of granting Industry Status to certain tourism units in the tourism sector viz. Hotels, Motels and Heritage Hotels, Amusement Parks, Convention Centre, Arts and Crafts Village etc. has been taken by the Government of West Bengal for the benefit of the tourism sector and enhancement of employment opportunities and thereby contributing to the overall development of the State.

Tourist Guides Certification Scheme has been introduced for certification, recognition and training of the New Tourist Guides and Veteran (existing) Tourist Guides. Presently out of 3,715 applicants 1,744 applicants have successfully completed their training and 728 applicants are likely complete their training in next few months. Also, assessment has been completed for 1,351 Tourist Guides and 736 are actively engaged in field.

Every year Tourism Department organises Kolkata Christmas Festival in Allen Park, Park Street, Kolkata with cultural programme from 22nd December to 30th December. The entire stretch of Park Street, Allen Park

and St. Cathedral Church and other churches in West Bengal are suitably illuminated with Christmas decor. This year also the festival was held from 21st December, 2023 to 30th December, 2023.

The Bishnupur Classical Music Festival pays homage to the pioneers of the art and keeps the rich cultural tradition of the Bishnupur gharana alive. Last year the festival was held at Jor Shrenir Mandir, Pora Matir Hat, Bishnupur from the 10th to 12th February, 2023.

West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Limited (WBTDCL) is mandated for developing, operating and managing hotels, lodges, guest houses, motels, restaurants etc. in the leading tourist destinations in the State. WBTDCL also offers tour packages to facilitate the hassle free travel requirements of the tourists. Multiple infrastructure development initiatives have been undertaken for various WBTDCL properties. These initiatives are at different stages of execution and several of these tourist properties have already been upgraded. Tourism Department has upgraded 522 rooms. Currently, WBTDCL regularly renovates and upgrades the tourism properties.

Sandakphu is the highest trekking point in the State of West Bengal and offers spectacular views of Mt. Kanchenjunga. The river Teesta flowing through

Sandakhphu makes it a spot for adventure activities like trekking and camping. 88 trekking routes have been identified so far to explore the Himalayan range in the State.

Tourism Department has curated 100 religious circuits covering more than 400 religious touch points. The Tourism Department has prepared a booklet named- 'Mahapunnyo Bhoomi Mahatirtho Bhoomi' to showcase the 100 religious circuits.

3.48 Information Technology and Electronics

In the ever-evolving landscape of technology and innovation, the Department of Information Technology and Electronics (IT&E) has been at the forefront of driving transformative initiatives during the fiscal year 2023-24. With a steadfast commitment to harnessing the power of information technology for the betterment of the State, the department has achieved significant milestones and spearheaded advancements that have not only propelled West Bengal into the digital age but have also laid the groundwork for a sustainable and progressive future.

West Bengal Internet Cable Landing Station Policy, 2023 has been launched to make West Bengal the most preferred destination of the Internet Cable Landing Station

Industry in the country and with a mission to attract foreign and domestic investment, to mentor MSMEs and StartUps and to create employment in order to build a vibrant eco-system in the State.

The Department of IT&E has formulated a comprehensive Data Privacy Guideline Policy to demystify the world of data privacy and empower individuals, government bodies and organizations to take charge of their data in a responsible and ethical manner.

In an age of rapid digitization, the West Bengal Government has given due priority to cybersecurity to safeguard digital assets and citizen information. West Bengal Cyber Security Strategy 2023, aims to strengthen the digital defences ensuring State growth in the evolving digital landscape. The cornerstone of West Bengal's cyber security strategy lies in a predominant focus on Cyber Awareness & Skilling, Cyber Security Assurance, Incident Response Management, Investigation and Forensic, Research and Development.

High-speed broadband network - Fibre to the Home (FTTH) implementation across the State is under progress. The bandwidth upgrade for 1435 circuits under WBSWAN has been successfully implemented. The cost of these circuits has significantly decreased (approximately 30% of the previous value).

Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Public WiFi Implementation in the Diamond Harbour Municipal area have been completed successfully. The objective of this project is to create localized public WiFi zones in urban, semi-urban and rural areas, enabling citizens to freely access knowledge, entertainment and information over the Internet.

Augmentation of West Bengal State Data Centre (WB-SDC) has been successfully completed with 4 petabyte storage capacity, 52 TB RAM, 25 GBPS bandwidth and around 2000+ VM compute capacity. The improved capacity along with shared, reliable, mission-mode and secured infrastructure service centres for hosting and managing the e-Governance application is successfully running.

Creation of the Disaster Recovery (DR) Site of West Bengal State Data Centre (WB-SDC) has been successfully completed with 1.7 petabyte storage capacity, 24 TB RAM, 25 GBPS bandwidth and 24 nodes.

Cyber Security Centre of Excellence (CS-COE) has won the 12th Digital Transformation Awards 2023 in the category 'Effective Use of Technology in Safety and Security' for the Project 'Security Awareness in Cyber Space'. First Responder Training (FRT) on Cybercrime Response successfully completed for 2780 police officials.

FRT program is now running simultaneously at seven other locations. CS-CoE created a tailor-made Diploma Course on Information Security and Cyber Forensics for the West Bengal State Council of Technical & Vocational Education and Skill Development (WBSCTVESD) which has received AICTE approval. In 2023, its first batch is graduating from Behala Government Polytechnic College alongside other polytechnic colleges.

Society for Natural Language Technology Research (SNLTR) is instrumental in developing Anumati Portal, a single window clearance system for providing NOC for the establishment of mobile towers & optical fiber in an efficient transparent & accountable manner. 7,326 applications have been approved in the portal.

Suvidha Vehicles Facilitation System has been made operational at six Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) on the Indo-Bangladesh border for quick clearance and smooth movement of vehicles. Rs. 383 crore (approx.) revenue generated as Suvidha facilitation fee. The export release time at ICP Petrapole has shown the most significant improvement of 72% from 50:59 hours in 2022 to 14:06 hours in 2023.

Unique Document Identification Number (UDIN) is a platform-based 25-alphanumeric system generated unique numbers for the documents attested by users/applicants in various domains. It has been implemented to secure transactions of various documents both self-attested and contractual from the citizens and retained under blockchain technology for a certain period of time. Till date 47,053 UDIN have been generated.

UDIN-based Single Window Driver Authorization Generation Portal, 'Anumodan', has been developed by the Government of West Bengal to facilitate vehicle owners to generate driver authorization. Before the implementation of the Anumodan portal, drivers had to carry the notarized consent in the Non-Judicial Stamp paper from the owner of the vehicle.

Other notable applications developed include: The Kolkata Taxi Mobility App-Yatri Sathi, West Bengal Cyber Security Incident Response Team (WB-CSIRT), State Skill Registry of the Government of West Bengal-Karmo Bhumi.

3.49 Consumer Affairs

The Consumer Affairs Department has taken several important initiatives for ensuring protection of the rights of consumers. During 2023-24 upto 31st December, 2023, total 12,932 programmes on Consumer Awareness have

been organized in 30 Regional Offices via Camps, Seminars, Street Dramas, Talking Doll Shows, Magic Shows etc.

The Directorate of Consumer Affairs & Fair Business Practices along with 30 Regional Offices participated in different fairs, exhibitions, social gatherings to disseminate consumer awareness and WBRTPS Messages. Wall writing on Consumer Protection Act, 2019 have been made at conspicuous places throughout the State. Messages on Consumer Protection Act, 2019 are being propagated through advertisement in 5 trams under CTC.

Messages on consumer awareness have been propagated by broadcasting through jingles in 7 F.M. Channels, by telecasting through Public Display system at Kolkata Metro Railway Stations (Incoda TV), displaying messages at conspicuous places like hospitals, schools, colleges, markets & P.S. etc through display of banners and hoardings and LED Board presentation at HIDCO, eight locations in Newtown, Rajarhat. Leaflets and booklets on consumer awareness were published in Bengali, Hindi, English and Urdu Languages in adequate numbers and are being distributed among common people for the purpose of sensitization. In addition to the existing 840 consumer clubs in schools, new consumer clubs have been set up in 395 new schools in different districts all

over West Bengal for carrying out consumer club activities for educating school students on consumer awareness issues. Messages on consumer awareness are also propagated through the journal 'Upobhokta Samachar'. Three Kreta Suraksha Mela have been organised in Siliguri, Paschim Medinipore and in Kolkata. National Consumer Day has been observed at the Auditorium, 4th Floor, Kreta Suraksha Bhavan with various awareness programmes on 22.12.2023.

In order to protect the common consumers from fraudulent activities of the unscrupulous traders, 3,691 no. of seizures from the user of weights and measures for violation of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 and 195 numbers of seizures for violation of the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 have been made.

At present 5 Benches of West Bengal State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission are functioning, 3 in Kolkata and 2 Circuit Benches, one at Siliguri and another at Asansol. The CONFONET Scheme is going on in full swing through all Districts Commissions and the 5 Benches of West Bengal State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. Regular Lok Adalat are being organized by the WBSCDRC and by all the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions every year.

During 2023-24, upto November, 2023 total 1,158 cases have been forwarded to Lok Adalat . In this year from 1st February, 2023 to 31st December, 2023 the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission alongwith District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission have disposed of 9,811 cases out of the total cases filed 9,973. To reduce the harassment of the public in general, e-Dakhil filing of complaints has started which is gaining momentum day by day in the different consumer court. Since launched 932 cases has been filed through this portal.

West Bengal Right to Public Service Act has been enacted and subsequently, in the year 2015, a Commission for the purpose was constituted to look after the 'Timely Deliverance' by various Government Departments to the people of the State. Till date, 29 services have been notified under this Act.

During 2023-24, construction of Integrated Offices Buildings (Kreta Suraksha Bhavan) have been initiated in the districts of Purulia, Birbhum, Paschim Bardhaman, Purba Bardhaman, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

Honb'le Speaker Sir,

I shall now place few proposals for the coming financial year—

**Social Protection and Traditional Employment Sector/
MSME :**

1. 2 crore 11 lakh women are now getting financial benefits from the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme. In order to strengthen the hands of our **women**, your Ma-Mati-Manush Sarkar is happy to announce enhancement of this financial assistance under Lakshmi Bhandar to **Rs. 1,200** per month for women belonging to SC/ST communities and to **Rs. 1,000** per month for women belonging other category. This enhanced financial assistance shall be extended through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) from **April 2024**, which they shall receive in the beginning of **May 2024**. An additional annual allocation of Rs. 12,000 crore has been provided for this purpose. On attaining the age of 60 years, there will be an automatic and seamless transition from Lakhshmi Bhandar **to old age pension scheme** and the beneficiaries will continue to receive the same amount.
2. Our fishermen of the coastal districts viz. Purba Medinipur, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas

go deep in the turbulent sea to earn their livelihood. As there is ban in fishing for two months during mid-April to mid-June, the livelihood of the fishermen is adversely impacted. In order to provide livelihood support to the fishermen during the fishing ban period of two months, I am happy to announce a new scheme—**Samudra Sathi** to extend financial assistance of Rs. 5,000 per month for two months, to each registered fishermen of these three districts. This scheme will benefit nearly **2 lakh** fishermen. I propose to allocate **Rs. 200** crore for this purpose.

3. In the last year's budget, a new scheme 'Bhavishyat Credit Card Scheme' was launched for our youth. Under this Scheme every year 2 lakh youth of the age group 18-50 years shall be provided financial assistance as loan up to Rs. 5 lakh through Banks for setting up micro enterprises and create employment opportunities.

I am happy to announce that our government has decided to strengthen the scheme and make it more affordable for micro enterprises. For this purpose, I propose to introduce Bhabishyat Credit Card Interest Subvention Scheme, so that all eligible entrepreneurs under this scheme are able to get collateral free and 100% guaranteed loans at a flat interest **rate of 4%**

only. The balance of the prevailing rate of interest will be borne by the State Government as interest subvention. This interest subvention benefit will also be made available to the already sanctioned loans under Bhavishyat Credit Card Scheme.

For this purpose, **Rs. 250 crore** is earmarked as annual expenditure. The scheme will benefit around **10 lakh** young entrepreneurs in the next few years.

4. I am happy to announce a new Apprentice Scheme for the youth. Under this scheme, the State will support training in industries of youth in the age group of 18 to 40 years from amongst those passing out of Vocational Training Centres run in Schools and Madrasas, student passing out from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Polytechnics and from amongst those registered under Yuvashree Scheme. The trainees in various industries will be provided an additional monthly stipend in the range of **Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 2,500** per month as per the training programmes. This will benefit **1 lakh youth every year**. I propose to allocate **Rs. 200 crore** for this purpose.
5. I am happy to propose a new Scheme for Artisans including traditional crafts and trades viz. West Bengal Artisans Financial Benefit Scheme 2024. Under this scheme, one-time grant up to Rs. 15,000

to individual artisan and up to Rs. 10 lakh for a group of artisans under an industrial cooperative society is proposed to be provided for buying tool-kits and or construction/repair of their work-shed besides providing support for marketing.

2 lakh artisans will be covered under this scheme in this financial year. Rs. 200 crore has been earmarked in this financial year for this purpose. **Another 4 lakh** artisans will be brought under this scheme in the next 4 years.

6. In order to provide social safety net to the artisans and weavers, I propose to introduce Artisans & Weavers (Death Benefit) Scheme. This scheme shall support the dependent family members of our registered Artisans and Weavers on account of their untimely demise. Under this Scheme, on the death of a registered Artisan & Weaver of the age group 18-60 years, either due to natural reasons or by accident, the dependent family members shall receive a **onetime grant of Rs. 2 lakh. Rs. 60 crore** is allocated for this purpose.
7. I am pleased to propose a new Scheme for Handloom and Khadi weavers viz. West Bengal Handloom and Khadi Weavers Financial Benefit Scheme 2024. This

scheme proposes to address the following three critically important elements of 500 primary weaver cooperative societies (PWCS), 200 khadi societies and individual handloom weavers :

- (i) Financial support for One Time Settlement (OTS) of NPA accounts of PWCS,
- (ii) Working capital assistance to societies and individual weavers and
- (iii) Supply of subsidized yarn.

Rs. 500 crore is allocated for this scheme. The scheme will **benefit 4 lakh weavers**.

8. Local Area Multipurpose Societies (LAMPS) with members from Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities are engaged in different livelihood activities including supporting members through SHGs in savings, credit linkage with banks, training and capacity building. In order to support and enhance institutional capacity of the SHGs under LAMPS, I am happy to propose to provide **Rs. 25,000** to each of the **10,000 eligible women SHGs**. Rs. 25 crore is allocated for this purpose. More than **1 lakh ST** women will be benefited.
9. By denying the legitimate claim of the State Government for release of fund under MGNREGA, the Central Government has deprived our job card

holders of their due wages for a long time. To provide financial assistance to these job card holders for their hard work, Hon'ble Chief Minister has announced release of fund for wages for the **21 lakh job** card holders within **21st February**, 2024. **Rs. 3,700 crore** is earmarked in this financial year for this purpose.

10. The Central Government has deprived our marginalised people of their minimum subsistence right by denying fund under MGNREGA.

In the last 2 years, the State Government has created 39 crore mandays of work at a total expenditure of Rs. 8,297 crore, with the assistance of different departments.

I am happy to inform that keeping in mind the sustained effort of the State Government to support these marginalized people, Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched a new scheme named '**Karmasree**'.

Under this scheme, the State Government will ensure at least 50 days of work to each job card holder. This scheme shall commence from May 2024.

Agriculture :

11. Agriculture is the foundation of our economic and social landscape. We have progressed remarkably in all fronts centered around production and marketing of agricultural produce and thus ensuring food security for all.

In this context, in order to provide support to our potato growers, I propose that like other crops, **Premium** for potato will now be borne by State Government under Bangla Sasya Bima Yojna which will benefit **20 lakh** potato growers. Additional fund earmarked is **Rs. 100 crore**.

12. In order to promote modern farm machinery in agriculture, it is decided that **2,000 farm machinery hubs and Custom Hiring Centers** will be set up at Gram Panchayat level in next two years. This will benefit nearly **30 lakh** farmers and create employment opportunities for youth in the rural areas. **Rs. 450** crore is allocated for this purpose.
13. In order to ensure speedy supply of seeds and credit linkage to farmers and enhance market connectivity of agriculture produce, we propose to set up **1,200 Farmers Produce Organizations (FPOs)** in next three years with each FPO having 300 members in plains and 100 members in the hill areas. I propose to allocate **Rs. 200 crore** for this purpose.

Education, Health and Culture :

14. Since 2022, under '**Taruner Swapno**' scheme, we are providing financial assistance of **Rs. 10,000** to each student for studying in **class 12 for** purchasing smart phone/tablet PC to enable them to continue their online studies by accessing online education materials.

It is now proposed to provide this financial assistance starting with **class 11 students**. This will help the students to use tablet PC/Smart Phone for two years. I propose to allocate additional **Rs. 900** crore for this purpose.

15. About 2 lakh 30 thousand Cook cum Helpers are engaged for providing Cooked Mid Day Meal to the students across the State. At present Cook cum Helpers are given Rs. 1,000 per month for 10 months in a year under the programme while State Government on its own is providing **additional Rs. 500 per** month as honorarium to each Cook cum Helper.

As financial support, it is proposed to provide **another Rs. 500 per month** as additional remuneration for each Cook cum Helper. **2 lakh 30 thousand Cook** cum Helpers will be benefited. I propose to allocate **Rs. 140 crore** for this purpose.

16. Madrasas will be upgraded in phases by introduction of modern and advanced education of curriculum including Information Technology and other vocational courses. **Rs. 50 crore** is earmarked for this purpose.

17. In the arena of culture, I propose to establish of a **Minorities Cultural Development Centre** with facilities to display cultural heritage of the six minority communities viz. Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhism, Jain, Parsi. The centre will have exhibition halls, training and coaching centre, and meeting halls etc. Training will be provided to the minorities communities through this Centre and this will create job opportunities for them. It is proposed to allocate **Rs. 20 crore for the project.**
18. We have achieved remarkable progress in health care coverage through our unique Swasthya Sathi Scheme. I am happy to propose extension of Swasthya Sathi Scheme **for migrant workers** residing outside of West Bengal registered in Karmasathi Parijayee Shramik Portal. Under the scheme, migrant workers will have access to hospital care in place of their work **through insurance coverage in Swasthya Sathi. Rs. 150 crore** is allocated for this purpose. More **than 28 lakh** migrant workers will be benefited.

Ease of Doing Business and Infrastructure

19. State Government has already introduced a policy framework for conversion of leasehold land to freehold. I am happy to announce that this policy for conversion of leasehold land to freehold will be

extended for all the government departments including its parastatals, Urban Local Bodies and Rural Local Bodies. For the convenience of the land allottees and for ensuring transparency a robust **online platform** will be launched.

20. In the past few decades there has been a sea change in the social, economic and industrial development in the country as a whole and in West Bengal in particular. One of the constraints faced by industry and business is **ceiling on private ownership of land**.

In the meantime, the Central Government has repealed the Urban Land Ceiling Act and many states have also repealed this Act. In this context, in our State also the current applicability of the Urban Land Ceiling Act will be revisited and examined. In addition, Land Ceiling provisions under the West Bengal Land Reforms Act will also be revisited & examined.

21. As part of our continued priority for assured power supply to our domestic and industrial consumers, I propose setting up of 4 new Super Critical Thermal Power units in Santaldih, Bakreshwar and Durgapur at an aggregate capacity of 2,920 MW with an

estimated project cost of Rs. 23,360 crore spread of next 4 years. The project will be taken up by State government in PPP mode. For the FY 24-25, I propose to allocate **100 crore** for commencing of the project activities.

22. Connectivity is critical for development. I am happy to announce that State Government has decided to take up the following projects :

- (i) A 3.1 KM bridge over river Muriganga connecting LOT 8 and Kachuberia at Sagar Island in the district of South 24 Parganas will be constructed. This project will be named as '**Ganga Sagar Setu**'. This will bring one of the most important pilgrimage place 'Ganga Sagar' to everyone's reach and access. This will also provide better connectivity for the local populace and enhance socio-economic growth and tourism potential of the area. This important project at an estimate cost of **Rs. 1,200 crore** is targeted to be completed in **next 3 years**. I propose to allocate **Rs. 200 crore** for the very first year.
- (ii) A new 640-meter 4 lane Bridge '**Shilpa Setu**' over river Damodar parallel to existing 'Krishak Setu'

of Burdwan- Arambag Road (SH-7) in the district of Purba Bardhaman. The newly constructed bridge will help improve transportation of local commodities and smoothen public transport and benefit the farmers and boost the rural economic growth in the area. The estimated cost of the project is **Rs. 246 crore** and is targeted to be completed in **next 3 years**. I propose to allocate **Rs. 100 crore** for the very first year.

(iii) In order to further improve city connectivity with New Town and Airport, it is proposed to construct a 7 KM 4 lane flyover from metropolitan crossing on Eastern Metropolitan Bypass to Mahisbathan adjacent to CG block of New Town. The estimated cost of the project is **Rs. 728 crore** and is targeted to be completed in **next 3 years**. I propose to allocate **Rs. 150 crore for the** very first year.

23. Hon'ble Speaker Sir, with the central government denying funds under PMAY, more than 11 lakh approved families have been deprived of their housing needs and have been living in difficult conditions.

The Central Government has not responded to our

repeated requests for release of our legitimate demand. We shall wait for another one month for receiving the fund which is due to us. If the Central Government does not respond positively to our demand, the State Government will consider to provide financial support to these families from its own resources.

24. Under Pathasree-1 and Pathasree-2 the State Government has created/renovated **26,487 km** rural roads at a cost of **6,448 crore**.

As the Central Government has refused to sanction funds under PMGSY, the State Government under the leadership and guidance of Hon'ble Chief Minister has launched **Pathasree-3** to improve the rural connectivity.

Under this scheme, around **12,000 km** of rural roads will be created/renovated at a cost of **Rs. 3,868 crore**.

Human Resources :

25. To ensure more efficient and faster delivery of public services to the people, the State Government will take urgent measures to fill up all vacant posts in various departments and parastatals.

26. More than one lakh fifteen thousand force of Civic Volunteers/Village Police/Green Police etc play an important role in assisting the police in maintenance of law and order. I am happy to propose an enhancement in their remuneration by **Rs. 1,000 per month** and an enhancement in the quota for absorption in **State police to 20% from 10%**. I propose to allocate Rs. 180 crore for this purpose.
27. For all contractual employees, casual employees including civic police, green police, village police etc. who are entitled for terminal allowance of either Rs. **2 lakh or Rs. 3 lakh as per** the existing orders of engagement, I am happy to propose that the one-time benefit on attaining the age of **60 years** is now enhanced to **Rs. 5 lakh for** all such employees. I propose to allocate **Rs. 100 crore** for this purpose.
28. I am happy to announce monthly remuneration of contractual Group D and Group C employees will be enhanced by **Rs. 3,000** and **Rs. 3,500 per month respectively**. This will benefit around 50,000 contractual employees. I propose to allocate **Rs. 288 crore** per year for this purpose.
29. I am happy to announce that remuneration of contractual IT personnel of different categories

brought under direct control of the government in 2020, has also been revised upwards. **Around 12,000** IT personnel will be benefited for which estimated additional expenditure will be **Rs. 132 crore** per year.

30. The august house will be happy to know that all gold, silver and bronze medal winners from West Bengal in Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and all National and International Games & Sporting Championships will be provided an opportunity with a Government job in Police Establishment up to the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) and other government departments depending upon the category of medal won and their academic qualifications.
31. We have given 4% D.A. from January 2024. As a result Government Employees, Teachers, Pensioners etc. are getting 10% D.A. now.

To provide some relief against inflation, I am announcing another 4% D.A. from our own limited resources which will be effective from May 2024.

I hope our employees will be happy with this announcement.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

Under the tax exemption proposal, I wish to propose the following:

32. I am happy to announce that to further streamline the tax collection under Motor Vehicle Act, state government proposes to introduce option for payment of Life time Tax at reduced rates for already registered vehicles and reduced tax rates for smaller passenger cars. This will benefit large number of vehicle owners and operators and help augment revenue for the State.
33. In order to give relief to hotel and restaurant owners from long pending disputed tax liabilities, I am happy to announce a Settlement of Disputes (SoD) Scheme for waiver of penalty and interest on Luxury Tax. Only the tax amount will be payable. This will benefit **5,000** hotels and restaurants owners with ease of doing business and improving their balance sheets, beside some revenue for the State.
34. As per the current Rules, the stamp duty payable on any transfer of property through gift within the family is at the rate of **0.5%** of the value of the property. In order provide **relief in property transfers within the family**, I am happy to propose a **maximum Stamp Duty of Rs. 1,000 only** in case of transfer of property by way of gift within the family.

Conclusion

Hon'ble Members,

You are kindly aware that because of our strategic planning and e-Governance initiatives, we have been able to implement our programmes and polices effectively and provide sustained and qualitative public services to our people.

This continuous and untiring effort of the State Government has received wide accolade from within the country and abroad.

Inspite of the continuous denial of legitimate funds by the Central Government, with our own limited resources, the State Government is implementing its welfare schemes for the development of the backward segments of the society, women empowerment and child welfare, with sincerity and transparency. This has ensured the protection of lives and livelihood of the poorest segment of the population. Similarly, to ensure creation of permanent and sustainable infrastructure, the State Government is following collaborative policy framework in coordination with various stakeholders and with external assistance from bilateral and multilateral organizations.

Sir,

I propose to provide Rs. 3,66,116 crore (Net) in the Budget of Financial Year 2024-25.

Sir,

We are committed to take the aspirations and dreams our people forward with firm determination.

This commitment is reflected in one poem written by our Hon'ble Chief Minister :

“ভেঙ্গে ফেলো বাঁধন ও বাধা বিঘ্ন
ব্যর্থ হতাশাকে করোগো ছিন্ন।
এগিয়ে চলো সব বিশ্ব পানে
জয় করে নাও সব সত্য সাধনে।
উদ্ভাসিত হোক তব প্রাণের জ্যোতি
ভুলে যাও গ্লানি, আনো কাজের গতি।
নতুন আবাহনে, নতুন চিন্তনে
আরাধনা হোক তব গীতবিতানে।
অগ্নিবীণার সব দহন দানে
পবিত্র হোক তব আনন্দ নিকেতনে।
উদ্বেলিত হোক তব নবজাগরণ
ধরণীর ধূলিতে ওড়াও বিজয় কেতন।
তোমরাই পারবে, তোমরা ছাত্র যৌবন
নবান্নতে আসুক ধন-ধান্য প্লাবন।।”

FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 2024-2025

WEST BENGAL ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 2024–2025

(Rupees in Crore)

	Actuals, 2022–2023	Budget, 2023–2024	Revised, 2023–2024	Budget, 2024–2025
Receipts				
1. Opening Balance	7.04	(–)2.00	(–)13.77	(–)5.00
2. Revenue Receipts	1,95,544.17	2,12,637.03	2,08,659.09	2,36,251.09
3. Raising of Public Debt	70,243.26	1,20,040.12	1,12,802.58	1,21,689.00
4. Repayment of loans by PSUs and Government employees	81.88	145.63	486.30	187.36
5. Receipts from Contingency Fund and Public Account	10,95,643.69	10,42,193.99	11,42,065.87	11,99,175.09
Total	13,61,520.04	13,75,014.77	14,64,000.07	15,57,297.54
Expenditure				
6. Revenue Expenditure	2,22,838.91	2,43,561.12	2,36,911.92	2,68,202.76
7. Capital Expenditure	22,008.78	34,026.23	30,536.91	35,865.55
8. Repayment of Public Debt	29,768.39	60,540.80	60,631.42	61,427.41
9. Disbursement of loans to PSUs and Government employees	564.49	1,034.23	1,002.55	620.30
10. Transfer to Contingency Fund	180.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
11. Expenditure on Contingency Fund and Public Account	10,86,173.24	10,35,859.39	11,34,922.27	11,91,188.52
12. Closing Balance	(–)13.77	(–)7.00	(–)5.00	(–)7.00
Total	13,61,520.04	13,75,014.77	14,64,000.07	15,57,297.54

(Rupees in Crore)

	Actuals, 2022–2023	Budget, 2023–2024	Revised, 2023–2024	Budget, 2024–2025
Net Results—				
Surplus (+) / Deficit (–)				
(a) On Revenue Account	(–)27,294.74	(–)30,924.09	(–)28,252.83	(–)31,951.67
(b) Outside Revenue Account	27,273.93	30,919.09	28,261.60	31,949.67
(c) Net, excluding Opening Balance	(–)20.81	(–)5.00	8.77	(–)2.00
(d) Net, including Opening Balance	(–)13.77	(–)7.00	(–)5.00	(–)7.00
(e) Expenditure for New Programmes/Additional Outlays				
(i) On Revenue Account	..	..	..	..
(ii) Outside Revenue Account	..	..	..	..
(f) Additional Resource Mobilisation under Tax Revenue	..	..	..	..
(g) Net Revenue Deficit	(–)27,294.74	(–)30,924.09	(–)28,252.83	(–)31,951.67
(h) Net Surplus/Deficit	(–)13.77	(–)7.00	(–)5.00	(–)7.00

