

15th Assembly Election West Bengal 2011

Election Manifesto

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee

Indian National Congress is participating in the ensuing election to the 15th Legislative Assembly in West Bengal with a clear objective of ending the misrule, lawlessness and anarchy perpetuated by the ruling Left Front government and has effected seat adjustment with the Trinamool Congress in order to present to the people of West Bengal the vision of a fair, well governed administration and a economically prosperous Bengal. Congress has continuously strived for and advocated peace in West Bengal and has consistently opposed the politics of violence and counter-violence. We are determined to end the undemocratic policies and practices of the last 34 years of Left Front government and reestablish Rule of Law in West Bengal.

India National Congress seeks the cooperation and support of people of West Bengal who are struggling and yearning for change and inclusive growth. In spite of a split in the Party, Congress has consolidated its organizational presence and strength and has worked toward realizing the hopes and aspirations of people of the state on a continuous basis. The uncontrolled reign of terror of the CPI (M) and the indiscriminate killings resorted to by the Maoists has created a civil war like situation in West Bengal. In the present context, both Marxism and Maoism represent twin dangers to peace and stability of the state. Politics of area control and domination has created a dangerous situation and general people of the state are terrorized and panic-stricken. Congress has also been opposed to the narrow, sectarian and communal politics of BJP. We have continuously stressed our political and ideological opposition to BJP and have played a positive role in not letting the political and social environment of West Bengal being polluted by the politics of BJP.

In the midst of such uncertainty and volatility clouding West Bengal, Congress would like to present before the electorate our approach and objective and some policies and programmes for the future governance of the state. We are sincere and committed to uphold these policies and programme in order to realize the vision of development and inclusive growth of the state.

Socio-Economic Development of West Bengal: Our Approach and Objective

Law and Order and Human Rights

West Bengal has been going through a crisis due to the long 34 years of Marxist misrule. An environment of fear and terror has been created through indiscriminate violence and political murders. Ruling party and the administration is completely hand in glove in perpetrating atrocities. CPI (M) is now opposing the Maoists after using them for its partisan end. Congress is committed to reestablish Rule of Law and Human Rights protection. Congress wants efficient and independent police administration. We would pursue seizure of illegal arms from throughout the state. Congress would actively pursue criminal cases of mass annihilation as witnessed in Saibari, Suchpur, Chhotto Angaria, Netai, Mangalkot, Ketugram and other such places.

Industry

Congress would initiate policies for the rejuvenation of industries and industrialization of state. A new industrial policy would be drawn up after due consultation with industrial houses, financial organizations and trade unions. We would like to frame a fair, transparent and comprehensive policy with regard to acquisition of land for industrial purposes. Congress would stress on drastic amendment of the old and antiquated 1894 law of land acquisition. Congress is in favour of compensating the farmers whose lands have been acquired by giving them a certain percentage of the profit earned through projects and commercial ventures on the acquired land.

Infrastructure and Communication

Congress would work toward infrastructure development and strengthening of communication network in the state. Congress would like to remove the deficiencies and inadequacy of infrastructure support and communication facility that discourages investment in the state. We would constitute Monitoring Committees for the well keep of the roads.

Employment Generation

Congress would strengthen the existing employment generating schemes of the central government. We would introduce a special employment and livelihood scheme for all unemployed youth registered as such for more than 5 years. All government schemes and programmes would be framed and implemented keeping in view the imperative of employment generation.

Congress would strive for 100 percent participation and success rate in achieving employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes of the central government.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Congress would work for the promotion of interest of farmers and agricultural labourers. Congress would participate in effective and full implementation of all centrally sponsored programmes of rural development, employment guarantee and poverty alleviation. Formation of marketing federations, announcement of minimum support prices for the protection of interests of the farmers and strict implementation of minimum wages act would be our objective. Congress would stress on development of model villages through drastic and positive improvement of roads and availability of power.

Flood Control, Erosion and Ganga Action Plan

Congress would give priority to schemes of flood control. Long term policy planning and measures to control river erosion would be emphasized. Congress would stress on the implementation of Ganga Action Plan. Disaster management group would be constituted at village and block level to face the adverse consequences of natural disaster.

Paschimanchal Development Council

Congress would emphasise on the development of western districts of the state. Congress would implement the Backward Region Development Grant programme of the UPA government in Maoist infested areas and backward regions of the state. Congress would support the demand of the people of the backward regions for elected and autonomous development council.

Religious Minorities

Congress is committed to the socio-economic development of minority community of the state and would ensure satisfactory participation of minority community in programmes focusing on poverty alleviation and employment generation. We will strive to implement the recommendations of the Sachar Committee. Congress would prioritize development of the Muslim community through quality education, employment opportunities, scholarship and stipend for the students and increase in the number of Madrasas. 15 Point Programme of Dr Manmohan Singh's government in this regard would be the focus of Congress.

North Bengal

A sincere, committed and well thought out plan of action is needed against underdevelopment and feeling of alienation in North Bengal. Congress would attempt to constitute an autonomous development council and vest it with specific powers for developmental goals. Modernisation of Rubber, tobacco and tea industry and extension of all the benefits of Pachayati Raj in the tea gardens would also be focused.

Urbanisation and Civic Services

Congress is committed to a healthy and organized urban life. Congress would stress on completion of all current programmes and schemes of urban development. International financial and development organizations and Non-Government organizations would be involved in this endeavour. Congress would ensure the development of the slums and various schemes for the upliftment of the poorer section of people through effective implementation of Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission and Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana.

Environment Protection and Pollution

Congress would strike a balance between the demands of development and the imperative of preservation and protection of environment. It will follow the directions and guidelines of the Supreme Court and the High Court in regard to environment protection.

Education

Congress is in favour of drastic and positive changes in the educational system of the state. We would like to introduce modern technical and vocational education. Language teaching in the school and college curriculum would be emphasized. Congress is committed not to jeopardize the interest of the poorer sections of students even while encouraging of private initiative and assistance in educational system.

Health Services

The entire health administration system would be overhauled. Strict enforcement of rules, discipline and accountability of staff would form part of the special initiative to be undertaken. Congress would take measures to establish hospitals having modern machines and facilities. Black-marketing in health care administration would be strongly dealt with. Congress would take measures against arsenic pollution.

Social Welfare

Congress would implement schemes and programmes for amelioration of the sufferings of physically and mentally challenged people. Free meal and would be provided for aged and destitute people. Orphan and street children would receive due protection. Residential schools would be established for the children of sex workers. In this regard, support and assistance of the NGOs would be solicited.

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment must be realized and achieved. Congress would implement all relevant policy and programmes of women empowerment. Congress is committed to laws supporting increased representation of women legislature and other elected bodies. Crime against women would be dealt with firmly. We would take necessary measures for the protection of the interests of working women and girl students.

Art and Culture

Congress will encourage and promote art and culture. It will be responsible for creating a conducive atmosphere for the pursuance of art and culture. It would administer government patronage in a non-partisan way.

Science and Technology

Congress will attempt to build up on the strength of the existing chain of research laboratories and research institutes and will adopt a policy in conformity and continuation of the advances in other parts of the country to give a face lift to development of science and technology.

Refugees

Congress recognizes the unique contribution of the refugees toward the development of the state. Government would commission a project to document the history of the refugee movement, their struggle, their rehabilitation and integration. We are committed to the citizenship claim and status of refugees who came to the state before 25th March 1971 and would attempt amendment of the Amendment to the Citizenship Act of 2004.

Scheduled Castes and Tribes

Existing benefit and positive discrimination schemes including reservations for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes would continue and Congress would work toward their extension. Representation of community members in all the government sponsored programmes would be ensured. Scholarship and stipend schemes would be extended and strengthened.

Hindi-Speaking Population

No clear policy and guidelines have been framed for the protection of the interests of Hindi-Speaking people of the state. Question papers in Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examination are yet to be framed in Hindi. Congress would establish a Hindi Academy and take measures to frame examination questions in Hindi. We will work toward faster establishment of the Hindi University in the state. Congress would ensure establishment of adequate number of Hindi schools in Terai, Dooars and industrial areas. At the same time Congress would also take steps to establish Hindi Colleges in the state.

NGOs

We are opposed to the policy of the Left Front government which has been hindering the work of the NGOs in the state. They are trying to dominate the NGOs, to make them subservient and to claim the good work of the NGOS as the work of the government and that of the ruling Party. Congress would work in partnership with NGOS with regard to work against illiteracy, menace of arsenic and polluted drinking water and for women empowerment and child protection, self-help schemes.

Tourism

Congress would initiate policies to strengthen the tourism sector. Development of tourism in North Bengal region, Sudarbans and tribal areas would be undertaken and development of the traditional and existing tourist centres would also be emphasized.

Darjeeling Hills

Congress will address the genuine concerns of the people of the hill areas of the state and would take a positive view of the need to promote Nepali language. We want a speedy conclusion of the ongoing tripartite discussion for establishing peace in the hills. We are opposed to the division of West Bengal.

Terai and Dooars

Congress would take effective measures to protect and promote the language and culture of inhabitants of Terai and Dooars region. Legitimate demands for decentralization maybe worked out through discussion and dialogue in a democratic atmosphere.

Pending Cases/Litigation

Congress believes that various cases and claims pending settlement and judgment must be speedily disposed. We will take necessary measures in this regard and would receive our highest priority.

Sundarban Development

The Congress will attempt to prevent the degradation of the world's largest mangrove forests due to ecological imbalance. A Master plan would be formulated to deduce the salt content in the atmosphere of the of the Sundarban region and to prevent unplanned and indiscriminate felling of trees. We will take measures to prevent poaching in the Sunderbans.

OUR DECLARATION

- Restoration of Rule of Law in West Bengal; Bold and effective measures against politics of violence and counter-violence; Administrative reforms at every level, Independent and impartial police administration and fair play and transparency in governance.
- Extensive use of technology in modernization of agricultural system and practices; Emphasis on augmentation of agricultural productivity; Time bound implementation of all irrigation projects.
- Reevaluation of land acquisition system and procedure of West Bengal in the light of the proposed amendment to Land Acquisition Act of 1894; Fair and transparent procedure in acquisition of land for industry and projects for public welfare; Adequate compensation at market rate for acquired land.

- Speedy and comprehensive measures to reach the benefit of proposed Food Security Act to people throughout the state and effective and meaningful revamping of the ration system.
- Modernization of drinking water supply system; Supply of drinking water to each household; electricity supply to each village and home in the state.
- Achievement of 100 percent success in reaching the benefit of all centrally sponsored scheme for poverty alleviation, employment generation and other public and welfare schemes.
- Effective and planned utilization of national and international capital, investment and technology for giving impetus to industrialization of West Bengal.
- Technology Mission and Knowledge Mission for augmenting human resources and to encourage excellence.
- Measures to encourage technical and vocational education at every level, Employment generation, improvement of wage structure and income level and skill development of the workforce through quality education and planning education.
- Special package for employment opportunities for all young men and women registered as unemployed for more than five years.
- A Commission to look into the interests and rights of workers in the informal sector.
- Well thought out planning, decision and effective implementation of measures for protecting and promoting the interests and rights of religious and linguistic minorities of West Bengal.
- Special economic package from the central government for the socio-economic development of North Bengal and measures for improving and deepening the economic linkages between North Bengal and North-East India.
- Establish West Bengal as the nerve centre of Eastern and North Eastern India and to project West Bengal as an economic powerhouse of India through industrialization, infrastructure development and modern communication system, human resources development and promotion of excellence.