

IEM MUN 2026

WEST BENGAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Study Guide

Agenda I

**Discussion on the Feasibility and Structure of a
Uniform Civil Code of West Bengal**

Agenda II

**Discussion on Industrial Rejuvenation and
Expansion Policy of West Bengal**

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly at IEM MUN 2026. Whether this is your first committee or your fiftieth, we hope the days ahead give you a genuine sense of what it takes to legislate for a state as large, as diverse, and as politically alive as West Bengal.

This year, the House will take up two agenda items, and both happen to sit at the centre of real debates unfolding in the actual West Bengal Assembly at this very moment. The first is the discussion on the feasibility and structure of a Uniform Civil Code of West Bengal, a subject that touches questions of law, faith, gender, and identity all at once. The second is the discussion on industrial rejuvenation and expansion policy of West Bengal, which asks how a state with a proud industrial past can rebuild its economic future. Together, these agendas ask delegates to hold two very different kinds of responsibility: the care required when legislating on matters of personal belief, and the pragmatism required when legislating on jobs, capital, and infrastructure.

We have grounded this study guide in current, real events wherever possible, because we believe a committee is far more rewarding when it engages seriously with the world as it stands rather than a flattened or hypothetical version of it. That said, this guide is a starting point and not a substitute for your own research. We expect delegates to read beyond it, to bring their own understanding of party positions, constituency interests, and policy detail, and to argue their briefs with conviction and evidence.

We ask every delegate to engage with honesty, courtesy, and an open mind, even when, and especially when, the debate turns contentious. Disagreement is welcome. Disrespect is not. Procedure exists to give every voice in this House a fair hearing, and we will hold the committee to that standard throughout.

Should you have any questions before or during committee, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are looking forward to a session marked by thoughtful argument, sound research, and a genuine spirit of debate.

With warm regards,

Sapnil Biswas, Speaker

Anwesha Bairagi, Co Speaker

Anurag Singh Dikshit, Deputy Speaker

The Executive Board

West Bengal Legislative Assembly, IEM MUN 2026

About the West Bengal Legislative Assembly

The West Bengal Legislative Assembly, popularly known as the Vidhan Sabha, is the unicameral state legislature of West Bengal. It traces its institutional lineage to the Bengal Legislative Council of the colonial period and was reconstituted as the West Bengal Legislative Assembly after independence in 1947. West Bengal once had a bicameral legislature, but the upper house, the Legislative Council, was abolished in 1969, leaving the Assembly as the sole legislative chamber of the state.

The Assembly currently has 294 elected seats, each representing a single constituency chosen through direct election under the first past the post system. The seat once reserved for the Anglo-Indian community, filled by nomination, was discontinued after the 104th Constitutional Amendment of 2020 abolished nominated seats across all state assemblies. The House sits at the Assembly House in the BBD Bagh area of Kolkata, close to the seat of the state secretariat, Writers' Building.

The Assembly functions much like any other state legislature under the Indian Constitution. It legislates on subjects falling within the State List and the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule, passes the annual state budget, holds the executive accountable through question hour, debates, and committees, and elects representatives to the Rajya Sabha. The Governor, currently R. N. Ravi, is the constitutional head of the state, while real executive authority rests with the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers, who are collectively responsible to the Assembly.

The 2026 Assembly elections, held in two phases on 23 and 29 April 2026, produced a historic result. The Bharatiya Janata Party won a landslide victory, crossing the two thirds mark with over 207 seats, and ended fifteen years of Trinamool Congress rule under Mamata Banerjee. This was the first time in the state's history that the BJP formed the government on its own. Suwendu Adhikari, formerly the Leader of the Opposition, was sworn in as Chief Minister on 9 May 2026, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Rathindra Bose of the BJP was elected Speaker of the House, and Sovandeb Chattopadhyay of the Trinamool Congress now leads the Opposition, which was reduced to about 80 seats.

This change of government is the backdrop against which both of this year's agendas have to be understood. A newly elected BJP government, carrying explicit election manifesto commitments, is now attempting to legislate on two very different fronts at once: personal law reform through the Uniform Civil Code, and economic revival through a new industrial policy. That is the situation this simulation asks delegates to step into.

Agenda I: Discussion on the Feasibility and Structure of a Uniform Civil Code of West Bengal

Introduction to the Agenda

The agenda for this committee is the discussion on the feasibility and structure of a Uniform Civil Code, or UCC, for West Bengal. This is not a hypothetical or purely academic exercise. In the real West Bengal Assembly, on 29 June 2026, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari informed the House that the government intended to bring a UCC bill during the August session, and announced the formation of a high level committee, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, to examine and finalise the draft legislation titled the Uniform Civil Code, West Bengal, 2026 Bill. This committee's mandate is to study the constitutional, legal, social, and administrative aspects of the proposed law before it comes back to the Assembly for debate and passage.

This simulation essentially recreates that moment. Delegates, representing MLAs across the treasury and opposition benches, are being asked to do what the real Assembly and its committee are doing right now: examine whether a Uniform Civil Code is feasible for West Bengal, and if so, what its structure should look like. Should it exempt tribal communities the way Assam's law does? Should it follow the Uttarakhand or Gujarat template closely, or should West Bengal, given its size and its roughly 27 percent Muslim population, the second highest proportion of any large Indian state, require a substantially different approach? These are live questions, not settled ones, even in reality.

It is worth noting why this agenda is particularly charged in West Bengal compared to states like Uttarakhand or Gujarat. West Bengal has a long and layered history around questions of religious identity, going back to the Partition of Bengal in 1947 and the subsequent decades of migration and communal politics. The previous Trinamool Congress government, under Mamata Banerjee, had publicly and repeatedly opposed the idea of a UCC in the state, alongside its opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, framing all three as threats to the state's minorities and tribal population. The BJP's ascension to power, and its swift move to operationalise its manifesto promise on the UCC, has made this one of the most closely watched legislative developments in India in 2026.

Delegates should treat this committee as a genuine deliberative body. The goal is not simply to replicate what the real government has announced, but to debate it seriously, to interrogate its constitutional soundness, its social consequences, and its practical structure, much as a functioning legislature would.

General Overview: What Is a Uniform Civil Code

A Uniform Civil Code refers to a single set of civil laws that would apply to all citizens of a country or state, regardless of their religion, in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance, adoption, guardianship, succession, and inheritance. It is meant to replace the current system in India, where these matters are governed separately for different religious communities under their own personal laws.

At present, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are governed by a set of codified laws passed in the 1950s, including the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 and the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. Muslims are largely governed by uncoded personal law derived from Islamic jurisprudence, given statutory

recognition through the Muslim Personal Law Shariat Application Act of 1937. Christians follow the Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872 and the Indian Divorce Act of 1869, while Parsis follow the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1936. This patchwork means that two citizens of India, depending only on their religion, can have different legal rights and obligations in matters like divorce grounds, inheritance shares, or adoption eligibility.

The idea finds its constitutional home in Article 44, a Directive Principle of State Policy under Part IV of the Constitution, which states that the state shall endeavour to secure a uniform civil code for its citizens. Because Directive Principles are not enforceable in court, this has long been treated as an aspirational goal. During the Constituent Assembly debates, Dr B. R. Ambedkar noted that a future Parliament could decide the timing and manner of introducing such a code, with no community forced into it without a reasonable transition.

The Hindu Code Bills of the 1950s codified and reformed personal law only for Hindus. The Shah Bano case of 1985, in which the Supreme Court held that a Muslim woman was entitled to maintenance under the general provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, reignited the national debate and led to the Muslim Women, Protection of Rights on Divorce, Act of 1986, widely seen as a legislative rollback of that judgment. The Sarla Mudgal case of 1995 again drew judicial attention to the absence of a uniform code. More recently, the 21st Law Commission, in a 2018 consultation paper, concluded a UCC was neither necessary nor desirable at that stage, while the 22nd Law Commission reopened public consultation on the subject in 2023.

Supporters of a UCC argue it advances equality before the law under Article 14, benefits women by removing unequal provisions found across several personal law regimes, simplifies the legal system, and strengthens national integration. Critics argue it risks undermining the religious and cultural autonomy protected under Articles 25 to 28, may struggle to accommodate India's, and West Bengal's, internal diversity including tribal customary law, and could be used as a tool of majoritarian politics if introduced without broad consensus. Goa remains India's one existing example of a common civil code, having retained the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 after its 1961 merger with India, though its small and historically distinct context differs greatly from a large, religiously diverse state like West Bengal.

The Uniform Civil Code Across Different States

Uttarakhand became the first state in independent India to pass a full Uniform Civil Code in February 2024, covering uniform marriage age and divorce process, equal inheritance for sons and daughters, a ban on polygamy and child marriage, and mandatory registration of live in relationships, while exempting Scheduled Tribes. Gujarat followed in March 2026 with a closely modelled law, and Assam passed its own version in May 2026, explicitly excluding Sixth Schedule areas and tribal communities such as the Kurmi. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh have all set up committees or announced intent to legislate, with Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh's panels, like West Bengal's, also headed by Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. Karnataka's 2023 manifesto and Jharkhand's 2024 manifesto both promised a UCC, though the BJP did not return to power in either state, so those plans were not carried forward.

A clear pattern emerges from these examples: wherever the BJP has implemented a UCC, it has consistently exempted Scheduled Tribes and similarly protected indigenous communities, reflecting

the constitutional recognition already given to tribal customary law under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. This is an important structural precedent for delegates to weigh.

The Uniform Civil Code and West Bengal

The Trinamool Congress government had taken a clear public stance against a UCC. In April 2024, Mamata Banerjee, addressing a public meeting in Malda, said the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the Uniform Civil Code would not be implemented in West Bengal, warning that their introduction would push minorities and tribal citizens toward losing their rights. The BJP took the opposite position, and on 10 April 2026, Union Home Minister Amit Shah released the party's Sankalp Patra for the West Bengal elections, promising a UCC within six months of forming government, alongside commitments such as the 7th Pay Commission and 33 percent reservation for women in government jobs.

Following the BJP's landslide win and Suvendu Adhikari's swearing in as Chief Minister on 9 May 2026, the government moved quickly. On 29 June 2026, Adhikari informed the Assembly that a draft bill titled the Uniform Civil Code, West Bengal, 2026 would go before the cabinet on 2 July and be tabled in the Assembly during the August session. He announced a high level committee, chaired by Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, including a retired IAS officer, a legal expert, an educationist, a social worker, and an additional secretary from the General Administration Department serving as member secretary, and gave it four weeks to submit recommendations.

Adhikari confirmed the law would follow the Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Assam models, and that West Bengal's tribal, indigenous, Kurmi, and other recognised ancient ethnic communities would be kept outside its purview. Given the state's population of more than ten crore, with close to 27 percent Muslim minority, commentators have flagged this as the largest and most religiously diverse population any state has attempted to bring under a UCC so far. The announcement triggered sharp opposition protests. The Trinamool Congress, now split into two camps after its defeat, one associated with Mamata Banerjee and represented by senior legislators such as Sovandeb Chattopadhyay and Kunal Ghosh, and another led by the new Leader of the Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee, has opposed the bill on different grounds, the former citing constitutional pluralism and political polarisation, the latter focusing on the pace and procedure of the bill's introduction. The BJP has defended the move as advancing women's empowerment, accusing the TMC and Congress of prioritising vote bank politics over women's rights.

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Questions a Resolution Must Answer, Agenda I (QARMA)

1. Is a state level Uniform Civil Code constitutionally sound, given that marriage, divorce, and succession fall under the Concurrent List, and personal law already interacts with several central enactments?
2. Should the West Bengal UCC seek Presidential assent as a matter of caution, given that a state law touching subjects on the Concurrent List can be repugnant to existing central legislation unless the President assents to it under Article 254?
3. What communities, if any, should be exempted from the code, and on what constitutional or customary basis? Should West Bengal follow the Assam model of excluding Scheduled Tribes and indigenous groups such as the Santhal and Kurmi communities?
4. Given that West Bengal's Muslim population, at close to 27 percent, is proportionally larger than in any state that has so far passed a UCC, how should the committee address concerns specific to Muslim personal law, particularly around inheritance shares, polygamy, and divorce procedures?
5. What concrete protections should be built into the code for women, particularly around inheritance, maintenance, and grounds for divorce?
6. Should live in relationships be brought under a mandatory registration requirement, as in the Uttarakhand model, and if so, what privacy and enforcement safeguards should accompany it?
7. What administrative machinery, staffing, and budget will be required to implement and enforce the code across West Bengal's districts, and is the government's proposed August 2026 timeline realistic?
8. What consultation process should precede the bill's final passage, and should the opposition and religious community representatives have a formal role in that process?
9. How should the bill be communicated to the public across Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, and Santali speaking populations, to avoid misinformation about its scope and intent?
10. What lessons from the implementation of the Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Assam codes should inform the drafting of the West Bengal bill?

11. How should the committee respond to the argument that a UCC introduced without broad political consensus risks being viewed as a majoritarian measure, and what structural safeguards could address that concern?
12. What is the appropriate role of the state Assembly, as opposed to the executive appointed committee, in shaping the final content of the bill before it is voted upon?

Agenda II: Discussion on Industrial Rejuvenation and Expansion Policy of West Bengal

Introduction: The Role of Industry in the Economy

Industry forms the backbone of economic development, converting raw materials into valuable products and services and driving growth well beyond the factory floor. Industrial activity contributes significantly to India's Gross Domestic Product and supports the livelihoods of millions of workers, directly and indirectly.

- **Economic growth:** industrialisation has been one of the principal drivers of India's economic growth, with rising production, investment, and technological advancement contributing substantially to national income.
- **Employment:** industry generates direct and indirect employment across both urban and rural areas, making it one of the most important levers available to a state government seeking to create jobs at scale.
- **Exports:** strong industrial exports build foreign exchange earnings and improve competitiveness in global markets. West Bengal's geography gives it a particular advantage here, with strategic access to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Southeast Asian markets that few other Indian states can match.
- **Infrastructure:** industrial growth pulls investment into roads, railways, ports, logistics, industrial parks, and power generation, improvements that benefit the wider economy well beyond the industries that prompted them.

West Bengal's Industrial Journey: Early Dominance, 1947 to the 1960s

At independence, West Bengal inherited a thriving industrial belt along the Hooghly river, anchored by jute, tea, heavy engineering, and coal based metallurgy. In the early 1950s the state accounted for a major share of India's total industrial output and factory employment, ranking behind only the Maharashtra and Gujarat region in manufacturing value added. Jute and cotton remained the state's largest employers, though ageing machinery limited output. Engineering grew rapidly around Howrah and Kolkata on the back of heavy central investment, while the tea gardens of Darjeeling and the northern hills sustained strong export volumes.

The Onset of Slowdown, 1965 to 1991

West Bengal experienced a severe industrial slowdown across this period, driven by a combination of factors rather than any single cause.

- Sustained labour unrest and strikes disrupted production across major industrial units.
- The economic dislocation caused by Partition continued to be felt in the state's industrial base long after 1947.
- The central government's Freight Equalisation Policy removed the price advantage West Bengal had long enjoyed on raw materials such as coal and steel located near their source, eroding its cost advantage in heavy engineering and manufacturing.
- Traditional sectors declined as jute mills, Howrah's engineering units, and heavy manufacturing giants such as Dunlop and Hindustan Motors suffered from ageing infrastructure, asset stripping, and deep management labour friction.
- A broader national economic recession, worsened by droughts in the late 1960s and wars, further starved basic industries of investment.

Many factories survived this period, but new investment increasingly flowed to other states.

Post Liberalisation Development, 1991 to 2011

The early post liberalisation years, from 1991 to about 1994, were marked by policy inertia, as the state government initially retained its traditional scepticism toward big business and private capital, while traditional industries continued their multi decade decline under obsolete machinery and rigid labour practices. A turning point arrived around 1992 to 1994, when the state's leadership recognised that agrarian reform alone could not sustain employment, prompting a rethink on private investment.

Between 1994 and 2006, the state actively welcomed private and foreign investment through a New Industrial Policy introduced in 1994, and sought to brand itself as an environment friendly investment destination. New sectors emerged during this period, most notably Information Technology and IT enabled services, which found a strong foothold in Kolkata, alongside steady growth in food processing, leather, and petrochemicals, including the Haldia Petrochemicals complex.

Between 2006 and 2011, however, attempts to acquire land for large scale manufacturing ran into serious trouble. The Tata Nano project in Singur and the proposed chemical hub in Nandigram both met fierce, localised peasant resistance and political mobilisation. The eventual withdrawal of Tata Motors from Singur in 2008 was a significant blow to the state's industrialisation goals and to investor confidence more broadly.

A Complex Transition, 2011 to 2025

Key achievements: the MSME sector emerged as a primary engine of the state's economy, driving strong manufacturing growth in the informal and small scale segment. Ease of doing business reforms, including the single window platform Silpa Sathi and automated compliance systems, meaningfully reduced approval times for smaller projects. The state also developed several specialised industrial and technology parks, improved logistics performance, and successfully transitioned from a power deficit state to a power surplus one, stabilising operations for energy intensive sectors and data centres.

Structural challenges persisted alongside these gains. Data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs indicated that thousands of companies shifted their registered legal offices out of West Bengal, citing operational or strategic convenience. Large scale land constraints, tied to a policy stance against direct land acquisition for private heavy industry, made it difficult to attract massive greenfield projects. Critics and opposition reports also pointed to a rising state debt burden and slower per capita income growth relative to fast industrialising coastal states such as Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

The Way Forward: Recent Developments

The change in government in 2026 has been accompanied by early signals of a renewed industrial push. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid the foundation stone for five brownfield expansion projects worth around Rs 3,500 crore in West Bengal, three for Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers and two for Yatra India Limited, aimed at expanding defence manufacturing, shipbuilding, and precision engineering capacity in the state.

The new BJP government under Chief Minister Suvenhu Adhikari has since gone further, holding direct consultations with industrialists and business chambers at the state secretariat, Nabanna, as it works to finalise a new industrial policy and a new incentive policy. Officials have indicated the government wants to move beyond one off investment announcements toward a sustainable industrial strategy addressing land availability, infrastructure, logistics connectivity, power subsidies, labour flexibility, and faster approval mechanisms. Reports suggest the Chief Minister has also been in conversation with economist Ashok Lahiri and is seeking closer coordination with NITI Aayog and central ministries to accelerate this process. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has separately assured central assistance toward reviving the state's tea and textile sectors. This context matters for the committee: unlike the UCC agenda, this is a policy area where the new government and the state's industry stakeholders appear to be actively converging around a shared, still forming, roadmap, which gives delegates real room to shape recommendations rather than simply react to an announced bill.

Areas for the Committee to Explore

The following areas, drawn from the current state of the debate, should guide the committee's recommendations.

- **Ease of doing business:** West Bengal currently ranks eleventh among Indian states on ease of doing business and reforms implementation, according to a joint World Bank and KPMG study. The state can improve this by strengthening single window platforms such as Silpa Sathi, expanding complete digital mapping and online tracking of land titles to reduce acquisition and registration delays, and accelerating dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Strengthening the MSME sector:** this sector already performs well and can be pushed further as the forerunner of industrial rejuvenation. Measures include more efficient use of the Bhabishyat Credit Card Scheme to widen access to funding, and increasing market access by connecting local artisans to national buyers through the Open Network for Digital Commerce and using the One District One Product framework for district level branding.
- **Strengthening industrial corridors:** investment ready industrial land remains essential for expansion. This includes plug and play facilities in planned industrial parks with ready to use power, water, and road networks, improved port access through hubs such as Dankuni, Haldia, and Tajpur, and building on West Bengal's established engineering ecosystem to create an advanced manufacturing corridor spanning Howrah, Durgapur, and Kharagpur, focused on precision components, railway and automotive parts, industrial machinery, and aerospace and defence components.
- **Leveraging existing sector strengths:** the agro based and food processing sector can be expanded through cold chain logistics, last mile warehousing, and packaged food units that convert raw produce into higher value exports. Legacy sectors such as jute and textiles can be modernised by tapping global demand for eco friendly, sustainable natural fibres, and existing clusters, such as garment manufacturing in Metiabruz or powerlooms in North 24 Parganas, can be formalised and expanded into export hubs. The state's established metal and engineering legacy can support an advanced manufacturing corridor focused on precision components, automotive parts, and railway equipment.
- **Upgrading the workforce:** this includes expanding technical education programmes such as Utkarsh Bangla to train youth in precision engineering, electronics, and IT hardware, building stronger industry academia links by partnering Industrial Training Institutes directly with modern manufacturing units for hands on apprenticeships, focusing on digital literacy, and training workers around port and freight corridors such as Haldia to handle high tech maritime, logistics, and processed agro goods work.
- **Modernising financial and structural governance:** this includes reforming the Urban Land Ceiling Act and other legacy laws that artificially restrict large scale corporate financing and collateral, monetising and recycling idle factory land into active industrial zones to unlock new equity based lending models, and directing institutional resources from bodies such as WBIDFC and WBIDC into high growth sectors, including specialised funds for projects such as the Panagarh-Durgapur semiconductor unit and regional defence manufacturing hubs.

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Questions a Resolution Must Answer, Agenda II (QARMA)

1. What structural reasons explain why West Bengal, once among India's leading industrial states, fell behind faster industrialising states such as Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, and which of these causes remain relevant today?
2. What lessons should the state draw from the Singur and Nandigram episodes when designing any future land acquisition framework for industrial projects?
3. Should West Bengal pursue large scale greenfield industrial projects requiring significant land acquisition, or focus primarily on brownfield expansion and MSME driven growth, given the state's political history around land?
4. How can the Silpa Sathi single window platform and land title digitisation be strengthened to meaningfully improve the state's ease of doing business ranking?
5. What specific reforms would most effectively expand MSME access to credit, and how can schemes such as the Bhabishyat Credit Card Scheme and the Open Network for Digital Commerce be scaled up?
6. What role should the proposed Howrah, Durgapur, and Kharagpur manufacturing corridor play in the state's industrial strategy, and what infrastructure investment would it require?
7. How should the state balance support for legacy sectors such as jute and tea, which employ large existing workforces, against investment in newer sectors such as semiconductors and defence manufacturing?
8. What workforce and skilling reforms are needed to make West Bengal's labour force competitive for advanced manufacturing and export oriented industry, and how should programmes like Utkarsh Bangla be scaled?
9. Should the Urban Land Ceiling Act and other legacy land laws be amended or repealed to unlock industrial financing, and what safeguards would be needed to protect existing tenants and smallholders?
10. How can West Bengal better leverage its geographic access to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Southeast Asia to grow industrial exports, and what port and logistics investment would this require?
11. What role should the central government play in West Bengal's industrial revival, particularly given recent central investment in defence manufacturing and assistance for the tea and textile sectors, and how should the state negotiate this relationship?
12. How should the state measure the success of its industrial policy, in terms of investment announced, jobs actually created, or long-term structural indicators such as per capita income growth?