

Policy Framework

IT Policy

The state has identified Information Technology (IT) as a priority focus sector to be developed into a growth engine. In 2003, the state adopted a comprehensive IT Policy, which aims at:

- Taking West Bengal to rank among the top three IT states in India in coming years.
- Contribute 15-20 per cent of the country's total IT revenues; Simplifying existing labour laws and consider ITES companies as 'Public Utility Service'(24 X 7) providers;
- Offering incentives that can greatly reduce the one-time and recurring expenditure of IT companies;
- Undertaking an aggressive e-Governance policy to connect almost 3,600 local self-governments (Gram Panchayats) and all the municipalities in the state.

Some of the ongoing state sponsored IT projects in the state are:

An ASP (Application Service Provider) service to act as enabler of e-Governance applications through an effective Government-Citizen interface

- Embarked on an aggressive IT literacy programme in schools and colleges in collaboration with industry leaders such as IBM, Wipro and NIIT
- Government to actively promote IT usage, thereby improve its services.

In the last three years, the state has made significant progress in these initiatives. Today, WBSWAN (West Bengal State-wide WAN), developed by WEBEL and Tata InfoTech, connects Kolkata to over 19 district headquarters and nine other important Townships in the state.

Several investment incentives are offered under the IT Policy:

A. Supportive regulatory framework set-up for investors

- Procedures under existing labour laws are simplified to ensure smooth operations.
- Self-certification allowed for IT companies on various acts.
- IT companies are awarded special status under various acts to improve infrastructure availability.
- Structural policy changes to boost the growth of IT.

B. Fiscal Incentive for IT investors

- One time fiscal incentives
- Exemption from consumption tax
- Quality linked incentives
- Recurring incentives
- Special incentives for mega projects.

Special Economic Zone Policy (SEZ Policy)

The state government is focused on developing SEZs. Investment incentives under the SEZ Policy include:

- Exemption from customs duty on import of capital goods, raw material, consumable, spares
- SEZ units are permitted to take job work abroad and export goods from there only
- SEZ units will have access to international finance at international rates through offshore Banking Units (OBU) to be set up within the zone.
- Entitlement of duty free imports of samples enhanced to \$6,000
- Exemptions from stamp duty and registration fees;
- Exemptions from all state and local taxes on transaction with the SEZ, This is also applicable with reference to supply from domestic tariff areas to the SEZ.
- Single window mechanism that deals with the grant of labour and environment related permits and approvals;
- Permissions to generate power for the SEZ's own consumption.

Bio-Technology Policy

The strengths of West Bengal lie in its highly diverse agricultural sector. Focusing on these strengths, a Biotechnology Policy has been developed to ensure scientific and technological empowerment of the state's human resources and create a strong infrastructure both for research and commercialization. The aims of the Biotechnology Policy are:

- To conserve bio-diversity through mapping and sustainable use of bio-resources;
- To encourage and facilitate introduction of biotechnology at the grass-root level to strengthen agricultural economy and promote village level industries;
- To support all employment generating activities in the field of biotechnology industry;
- To create a "Centre of Excellence for Biotechnology" as a high quality support service to biotech industries;
- To create or to act as a catalyst for creating high quality infrastructure for biotech industries, or example, Biotechnology Parks;
- To facilitate development of human resources at different levels in the field of biotechnology;
- To attract private investment for perceptible growth in the industry;
- To extend fiscal incentives and concessions to the industry.

Mineral Policy

The basic objectives of Mineral Policy are as follows:

- To explore the state's mineral wealth and exploit mineral resources;
- To review the existing state monopolies over mineral exploitation and, wherever required, go in for selective de-reservation;
- To encourage mineral Public Sector Units (PSU) to concentrate on specific sectors to ensure better economics;
- To invite private capital, resources and technology, both foreign and domestic in mineral exploitation;
- To promote research and development activities in the mineral sector;
- To ensure establishment of appropriate educational and training facilities for human resource development to meet the manpower requirements of the mineral industry;

- To minimize the adverse effect of mineral development on the forest, environment and ecology through appropriate protective measures;
- To ensure conduct of mining operations with due regard to safety and health of all concerned;
- To ensure proper vigilance and supervision of mining activities with particular emphasis on simplification of procedures and greater generation of revenues from mineral resources;
- To create a database on mineral resources of the state;
- To develop industry friendly facilitators in specific minerals like coal, granite and china clay and in natural gas like coal bed methane.