

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
LAW DEPARTMENT**

Legislative

West Bengal Act IX of 2001¹

**THE WEST BENGAL HERITAGE COMMISSION
ACT, 2001.**

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West Bengal Act IX of 2001

THE WEST BENGAL HERITAGE COMMISSION ACT, 2001.

[Passed by the West Bengal Legislature.]

[Assent of the Governor was first published in the *Calcutta Gazette, Extraordinary*, of the 21st March, 2001.]

An Act to provide for the establishment of a Heritage Commission in the State of West Bengal for the purpose of identifying heritage buildings, monuments, precincts and sites and for measures for their restoration and preservation.

Whereas it is expedient to provide for the establishment of a Heritage Commission in the State of West Bengal for the purpose of identifying heritage buildings, monuments, precincts and sites and for measures for their restoration and preservation;

It is hereby enacted in the Fifty-second Year of the Republic of India, by the Legislature of West Bengal, as follows:—

CHAPTER I

Preliminary.

1. (1) This Act may be called the West Bengal Heritage Commission Act, 2001.

Short title,
extent and
commence-
ment.

(2) It extends to the whole of West Bengal.

(3) It shall come into force on such date, and in such area (hereinafter referred to as the said area), as the State Government may, by notification (hereinafter referred to as the former notification), appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different areas:

Provided that the State Government may, by notification, rescind the former notification and, thereupon, this Act shall cease to be in force in the said area with effect from such date as may be specified in the notification.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

Definitions.

- (a) “building” includes any structure or erection or part of a structure or erection which is intended to be used for residential, industrial, commercial, cultural or other purposes, whether in actual use or not;

(Chapter I.—Preliminary.—Section 2.)

- (b) “building operations” includes rebuilding operations, structural alterations of, or additions to, buildings, or other operations normally undertaken in connection with the construction of buildings;
- (c) “Commission” means the West Bengal Heritage Commission established under section 3;
- (d) “development” with its grammatical variations means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under, land or the making of any material change in any building or land, and includes re-development;
- (e) “engineering operations” includes the formation or laying out of means of access to a road or the laying out of means of water supply or drainage;
- (f) “heritage building” means any building of one or more premises or any part thereof which requires preservation and conservation for historical, architectural, environmental or cultural importance, and includes such portion of the land adjoining such building or any part thereof as may be required for fencing or covering or otherwise preserving such building, and also includes the areas and buildings requiring preservation and conservation for the purpose as aforesaid under sub-clause (ii) of clause (a) of sub-section (4) of section 31 of the West Bengal Town and Country (Planning and Development) Act, 1979, monuments of heritage importance, as defined in clause (i) of this section, precincts or such other sites commonly considered for heritage importance;
- (g) “local authority” means any Municipal Corporation established under any West Bengal Act or Municipality under the West Bengal Municipal Act, 1993 or any *Panchayat* constituted under the West Bengal *Panchayat* Act, 1973;
- (h) “member” means a member of the Commission, and includes its Chairperson;
- (i) “monuments of heritage importance” means any building, structure, erection, monolith, monument, mound, tumulus, tomb, place of interment, cave, sculpture, inscription on an immovable object or any part or remains thereof, or any site, which the State Government, by reason of its heritage association, considers it necessary to protect against destruction, injury, alteration, mutilation, defacement, removal, dispersion or falling into decay;

West Ben.
Act XIII of
1979.

West Ben.
Act XXII of
1993.

West Ben.
Act XLI of
1973.

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(Chapter II.—Establishment of Commission.—Sections 3, 4.)

- (j) “notification” means a notification published in the *Official Gazette*;
- (k) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made by the State Government;
- (l) “public amenity” includes road, water supply, street lighting, drainage, sewerage, public works, or such other convenience as the State Government may, by notification in the *Official Gazette*, specify to be a public amenity for the purposes of this Act;
- (m) “regulation” means a regulation made under this Act;
- (n) “rule” means a rule made by the State Government under this Act.

CHAPTER II

Establishment of Commission.

3. (1) With effect from such date as the State Government may, by notification in the *Official Gazette*, appoint, there shall be established a Commission by the name of the West Bengal Heritage Commission.

Establishment of Commission.

(2) The Commission shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to contract and shall, by the said name, sue or be sued.

4. The Commission shall be chaired by an eminent person with concern and commitment for Heritage Conservation and shall consist of not more than twenty-one members, interested in all matters relating to the national and regional heritage. The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson and the following members:—

Composition of Commission.

- (a) Director of Archaeology and Museum, Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal;
- (b) a representative of a Department of Environment, Government of West Bengal (preferably an Environmentalist);
- (c) a representative of the Department of Urban Development, Government of West Bengal (preferably a Structural Engineer or an Architect);
- (d) a representative of the Municipal Affairs Department or the Department of *Panchayat* and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal;

(Chapter II.—Establishment of Commission.—Sections 5-7.)

- (e) six members of the Municipal Corporations and the Municipalities in West Bengal, of whom not less than two shall be the Mayor, Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and the Mayor, Howrah Municipal Corporation, or their nominees, one shall be the representative of the Municipalities of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong in the District of Darjeeling and the other three from amongst other Municipal Corporations, Municipalities and *Zilla Parishads* in West Bengal, to be nominated by the State Government;
- (f) eleven members from the areas of specialisation, namely, History, Art-History, Fine Arts, Architecture, Conservation, Law (with special reference to property matters), Structural Engineering, Town and Country Planning, Industry and Commerce, of whom two shall be from Industry and Commerce.

Terms and
conditions of
service of
members.

5. (1) A member shall hold office for a term of three years from the date of his appointment, unless his appointment is terminated earlier by the State Government.

(2) A person who holds, or who has held, office as Chairperson or member shall be eligible for re-appointment to that office once only.

(3) A member may resign his office by writing under his hand addressed to the State Government, but he shall continue in office until his resignation is accepted by the State Government.

(4) A casual vacancy caused by the resignation of a member under sub-section (3) or for any other reason, shall be filled by fresh appointment.

(5) A member may be appointed either as a whole-time or part-time member as the State Government thinks fit.

(6) Subject to the foregoing provisions of this section, the terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and other members shall be such as may be prescribed.

Meetings of
Commis-
sion.

6. The Commission shall meet at such times and places, and shall observe such rules of procedure in regard to the transaction of business at its meetings, as may be prescribed by regulations.

Vacancies
amongst
members, or
defect in the
constitution,
of Commis-
sion not to
invalidate
acts or
proceedings
of Commis-
sion.

7. No act or proceedings of the Commission shall be deemed to be invalid by reason merely of any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution of, the Commission.

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*(Chapter II.—Establishment of Commission.—Sections 8-10.—
Chapter III.—Powers and functions of Commission.—Section 11.)*

8. (1) The Commission may associate with itself, in such manner and for such purposes as may be determined by regulations, any person whose assistance or advice it may desire in carrying out any provision of this Act.

Temporary association of persons with Commission for specific purposes.

(2) A person associated with the Commission under sub-section (1) for any purpose shall have a right to take part in the discussions relevant to that purpose, but shall not have the right to vote at a meeting of the Commission and shall not be a member for any other purpose.

9. (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Commission, appoint a Secretary of the Commission who shall hold office for such period as may be prescribed:

Appointment of staff of Commission.

Provided that the first appointment of the Secretary may be made by the State Government without consultation with the Commission.

(2) The terms and conditions of service of the Secretary shall be such as may be prescribed.

(3) Subject to any rules, the Commission may appoint such other employees as it may think necessary for the efficient performance of its functions under this Act, and the terms and conditions of service of the employees so appointed shall be such as may be determined by regulations.

10. All orders and decisions and other instruments of the Commission shall be authenticated by the signature of the Secretary or any other officer of the Commission duly authorised by it in this behalf.

Authentication of orders and other instruments of Commission.

CHAPTER III

Powers and functions of Commission.

11. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, all local authorities shall refer anything related to identification, restoration and preservation of any heritage building or any other development or any engineering operation which is likely to affect preservation of any heritage building, for advice.

Powers and functions of Commission.

(Chapter III.—Powers and functions of Commission.—Section 11.)

(2) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (1), the functions of the Commission shall be—

- (i) to advise the State Government on preparing a classification of buildings in certain grades of heritage buildings after scrutinising applications and proposals received, including supplementing the existing list of buildings as well as all other matters relating to heritage conservation;
- (ii) to advise the State Government on any alteration, modification or relaxation of any law for the time being in force for development, control and conservation of any heritage building;
- (iii) to advise the local authorities, where necessary, on the policy of the grant of any certificate of right of development of any heritage building;
- (iv) to advise whether to allow commercial or other use of heritage buildings and, if so, when to prohibit such use;
- (v) to advise the State Government on framing of special regulations for such heritage buildings as may be listed by the State Government;
- (vi) to advise the local authorities to regulate the installation of advertisement and display structure in respect of heritage buildings;
- (vii) to advise the State Government on guidelines to be adopted by private parties who sponsor beautification schemes in West Bengal;
- (viii) to advise the local authorities on the cost of repair of heritage buildings and the policy to be adopted for raising repair-funds from private sources;
- (ix) to advise the local authorities to prepare special designs and guidelines for heritage buildings controlling the height and essential characteristics and to suggest other aspects of conservation and restoration;
- (x) to advise the local authorities on the provision of incentive by exemption from payment of rates or taxes or fees for supply of water or any other charge in respect of heritage buildings;
- (xi) to advise the State Government on the penal measures for defacing or destroying a heritage building;
- (xii) to advise the State Government and the local authorities on the making of provision for restoration of heritage buildings;

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*(Chapter III.—Powers and functions of Commission.—
Sections 12-14.)*

- (xiii) to advise the State Government and the local authorities on documentation of records of heritage buildings;
- (xiv) to advise the State Government on the steps to involve public opinion in mobilisation of efforts for creating awareness, preserving or maintaining heritage, and the consciousness of its visible architectural and natural evidences, so as to foster the creation of a popular mandate for heritage preservation;
- (xv) to advise the State Government on any other matter relating to restoration or preservation of buildings of heritage importance as may be entrusted by the State Government to the Commission.

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no local authority shall take any step for identification, preservation, conservation or restoration of any heritage building, not consistent with the determination or advice of the Commission.

12. If any local authority is aggrieved by any advice of the Commission in respect of any building operation, engineering operation or development proposal referred to the Commission under sub-section (1) of section 11, such local authority may, within sixty days from the date of advice by the Commission, prefer an appeal to the State Government, and the State Government may pass such order thereon as it deems fit.

Appeal to
State
Government
in certain
cases.

13. Nothing contained in this Act shall preclude the State Government from calling for, and examining, on its own motion, if that Government considers it necessary so to do in the public interest, any case of advice by the Commission under sub-section (1) of section 11 and passing such order thereon as it thinks fit:

Power of
State
Government
to revise
decision in
certain
cases.

Provided that no such order shall be made prejudicially affecting any local authority, except after giving it an opportunity of making a representation in the matter.

14. The decision of the State Government in an appeal under section 12 or revision under section 13, shall be final and binding and shall not be questioned in any court of law.

Decision of
State
Government
not to be
questioned.

*(Chapter III.—Powers and functions of Commission.—
Sections 15, 16.—Chapter IV.—Fund, Accounts and
Audit.—Sections 17, 18.)*

Powers of
Commis-
sion.

15. For the purpose of performing its functions under this Act, the Commission shall have the same powers as are vested in a Civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, in respect of the following matters:— 5 of 1908.

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him;
- (b) requiring discovery and production of any documents;
- (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;
- (d) requisitioning any public record or copies thereof from any office;
- (e) any other matter which may be prescribed.

State
Government
and local
authority to
accept, and
to take
action in
accordance
with, the
advice of the
Commis-
sion.

16. (1) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the State Government and every local authority shall accept every advice of the Commission to that Government or the local authority, as the case may be, and shall take action for prompt and effective implementation of such advice.

(2) The State Government may, for the purposes of sub-section (1), give such directions to a local authority as it may deem fit and, thereupon, such local authority shall act according to the directions as aforesaid.

CHAPTER IV

Fund, Accounts and Audit.

Payment to
Commis-
sion.

17. The State Government may, after due appropriation made by the State Legislature by law in this behalf, pay to the Commission in each financial year such sums as the State Government may consider necessary for the performance of the functions of the Commission under this Act.

Fund of
Commis-
sion.

18. (1) The Commission shall have its own fund, and all sums which may, from time to time, be paid to it by the State Government shall be carried to the fund of the Commission and all payments by the Commission shall be made therefrom.

(2) The Commission may spend such sums as it thinks fit for performing its functions under this Act, and such sums shall be treated as expenditure payable out of the fund of the Commission.

(Chapter IV.—Fund, Accounts and Audit.—Sections 19-21.)

(3) All moneys in the fund shall be deposited in such bank, or invested in such manner, as may, subject to the approval of the State Government, be decided by the Commission.

(4) The Commission may receive in its fund, and make expenditure out of it, any donation or grant from the Central Government or the State Government, or any statutory body or undertaking under the Central Government or the State Government, or local authority, or Trust or from any voluntary organisation, or any individual, as may be prescribed.

(5) The receipt and the expenditure from the fund of the Commission shall be done in the manner prescribed.

19. The Commission shall, in each year, prepare, in such form, and within such time, as may be prescribed, a budget in respect of the financial year next ensuing, showing the estimated receipts and expenditure, and copies thereof shall be forwarded to the State Government.

Budget.

20. The Commission shall prepare once every year, in such form, and within such time, as may be prescribed, an annual report giving a true and full account of its activities during the previous year, and copies thereof shall be forwarded to the State Government, and the State Government shall cause every such report to be laid before the State Legislature.

Annual
report.

21. (1) The Commission shall cause to be maintained such books of accounts and other books in relation to its accounts in such form, and in such manner, as may, in consultation with the Principal Accountant General, West Bengal, be prescribed.

Accounts
and audit.

(2) The Commission shall, as soon as may be after closing its annual accounts, prepare a statement of accounts in such form as may be prescribed and forward the same to the Principal Accountant General, West Bengal, by such date as the State Government may, in consultation with the Principal Accountant General, West Bengal, determine.

(3) The accounts of the Commission shall be audited by the Principal Accountant General, West Bengal, at such times, and in such manner, as he thinks fit.

(4) The annual accounts of the Commission together with the audit report thereon shall be forwarded to the State Government, and the State Government shall cause the same to be laid before the State Legislature and shall also forward a copy of the audit report to the Commission for taking appropriate action on the matters arising out of the audit report.

(Chapter V.—Miscellaneous.—Sections 22-26.)

CHAPTER V

Miscellaneous.

Returns and
information.

22. The Commission shall furnish to the State Government such returns or other information with respect to its fund or activities as the State Government may, from time to time, require.

Delegation
of powers.

23. The Commission may, by general or special order in writing, delegate to the Chairperson, or any other member, or any officer, of the Commission, subject to such conditions and limitations, if any, as may be specified in the order, such of its powers and functions under this Act as it may deem necessary for the efficient running of the day-to-day administration of the Commission.

Members
and officers
of
Commission
to be public
servants.

24. The members and officers of the Commission shall, when acting, or purporting to act, in pursuance of any of the provisions of this Act, be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code.

45 of 1860.

Protection of
action taken
in good
faith.

25. No suit or other legal proceeding shall lie against any member or officer of the Commission in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of any provision of this Act.

Power to
make rules.

26. (1) The State Government may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters:—

- (a) the salaries, if any, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of members of the Commission;
- (b) the terms and conditions of service of the Secretary of the Commission;
- (c) the matters in respect of which the Commission may tender advice to the State Government under clause (i) of sub-section (2) of section 11;
- (d) the form in which, and the time within which, the budget and annual report of the Commission may be prepared and forwarded to the State Government;

(Chapter V.—Miscellaneous.—Sections 27, 28.)

- (e) the form and manner in which the accounts of the Commission may be maintained, and the time at which, and the manner in which, such accounts may be audited;
- (f) the returns and information which the Commission may be required to furnish to the State Government;
- (g) the conditions subject to which any building, building operation or engineering operation, designed as a result of an architectural competition, may be exempted;
- (h) any other matter which may be, or is required to be, prescribed.

(3) Every rule made by the State Government under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the State Legislature while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, the State Legislature agrees in making any modification in the rule, or the State Legislature agrees that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

27. The Commission may, with the previous approval of the State Government, by notification, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder for—

Power to
make
regulations.

- (a) regulating the meetings of the Commission and the procedure for conducting business thereat;
- (b) regulating the manner in which, and the purposes for which, persons may be associated with the Commission under section 8;
- (c) determining the terms and conditions of service of persons appointed by the Commission under sub-section (3) of section 9;
- (d) any other matter which has to be, or may be prescribed by regulations.

28. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may make such order, or do such thing, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as appears to the State Government to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty:

Power to
make order
for removing
difficulty.

(Chapter V.—Miscellaneous.—Section 29.)

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of publication of this Act in the *Official Gazette*.

Act to have
overriding
effect.

29. The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, providing for heritage buildings.

**Statement of Objects and Reasons on the West Bengal
Heritage Commission Bill, 2001 (Bill No. 11 of 2001).**

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS.

The Government of West Bengal set up a Heritage Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Barun De to consider and recommend measures for providing effective and efficient arrangement for identification and preservation of all heritage buildings, monuments, precincts, etc. in the State of West Bengal. The said Committee submitted their report with the recommendation that a Heritage Commission Act should be enacted to provide for the establishment of a Heritage Commission in the State of West Bengal with the objective of identifying heritage buildings, monuments, precincts, sites, etc. and for recommending measures for their restoration and preservation.

2. On the recommendation of the said Committee, Government of West Bengal has now decided to establish a Heritage Commission for the purpose mentioned above and to empower the State Government and the local authorities to implement the advice and recommendations of the Commission.

3. The Bill has been framed with the above object in view.

KOLKATA,

The 5th February, 2001.

BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE,
Member-in-charge.