

# Vande Mataram must in govt schools

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Calcutta: The education department on Tuesday made the singing of *Vande Mataram* during morning assembly mandatory in government and government-aided schools.

"All students in all schools in the state" have to sing *Vande Mataram* in the morning "with immediate effect", says the order.

"The singing of *Vande Mataram* during morning assembly prayers prior to the start of classes should be made mandatory.... *Vande Mataram* should be sung by all the students in all schools in the state with immediate effect," says the government order sent to heads of government and government-aided schools.

"All are requested to comply with the message and give feedback in this group positively," the order says.

The Mamata Banerjee government had asked all government and aided schools to include the "state song," *Banglar Mati Banglar Jol*, in the morning assembly.

Rabindranath Tagore composed



Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

it in 1905 to protest the partition of the then-undivided Bengal by Lord Curzon.

The new BJP government's decision was taken on Tuesday.

In January, the Union home ministry said all six stanzas of *Vande Mataram*, the national song written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, must be sung before the national anthem (*Jana Gana Mana*).

The decision was to mark the 150th year of *Vande Mataram*.

In Bengal schools, before *Banglar Mati Banglar Jol* was added, only the national anthem — also composed by Tagore — was sung.

The Bengal education department's decision on *Vande Mataram* came a week after the Union Cabinet approved a proposal to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, to make any obstruction to the singing of the national song *Vande Mataram* a punishable offence.

In the morning assembly, scheduled from 10.40am to 10.50am, *Vande Mataram* has to be sung first. Heads of institutions have been asked to video record the assembly and send the footage to the education department as proof of compliance, a district inspector of schools told Metro.

Swapan Mandal of the Bengal Teachers' and Employees' Association said the Trinamool government had not specified which song should be sung first, leaving the decision to individual schools.

"Unless there is further clarification, it seems all three songs have to be sung now," Mandal said.

"It is unclear whether we have to finish all three songs within the stipulated 10 minutes or have a longer prayer," the schoolteacher said.