

Disquiet among Mamata's intelligentsia allies as list of TMC leaders under cloud grows

*Written by Atri Mitra Kolkata / Updated: September 9, 2022
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On September 1, when West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo [Mamata Banerjee](#) led a rally in [Kolkata](#) as a thanksgiving gesture to the UNESCO for including the city's Durga Puja in its Intangible Cultural Heritage list, she was accompanied by many TMC leaders and legislators including TV and film actors who got elected as party MLAs and MPs.

Among the prominent faces who were conspicuous by their absence at this grand rally were independent writers, academics, painters, musicians and film and theatre personalities, such as Jogen Chowdhury, Aparna Sen, Nachiketa, Kaushik Sen, Arpita Ghosh and Sohini Sengupta among others, many of whom had rallied round Mamata during her landmark Singur and Nandigram movements in protest against the then CPI(M)-led Left Front regime's land-acquisition policy.

This group of intellectual and cultural figures had played a remarkable role in helping Mamata oust the 34-year Left regime from power in the 2011 Bengal Assembly polls. In the previous Assembly polls last year too they had strongly supported Mamata to keep the BJP at bay, whom they have always accused of allegedly practising the politics of communalism and polarisation.

However, in worrying signs for the ruling TMC, these

intellectuals and artists are now increasingly distancing themselves from the TMC dispensation as a slew of its leaders and functionaries have been allegedly implicated in various cases or scams after coming under the scanner of central agencies like the CBI and ED.

On September 7, the state law and PWD minister Moly Ghatak became the latest TMC leader to have been **raided by a central agency**, the CBI in this case, over his alleged involvement in a case of multi-crore coal smuggling from a state coalfield. Ghatak had already been summoned by the ED several times for questioning. Several TMC leaders, including the party's national general secretary and Mamata's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, are on the radar of the central agencies over this scam. **Abhishek has also been questioned** by the ED several times.



Mamata Banerjee leads a rally in Kolkata as a thanksgiving gesture to the UNESCO for including the city's Durga Puja in its Intangible Cultural Heritage list (Express Photo: Partha Paul)

On July 22, a day after the TMC's martyrs day rally, the ED raided multiple places in Bengal and **finally arrested** the then education minister and TMC heavyweight Partha Chatterjee in connection with the

school jobs scam. It also recovered **[Rs 50 crore cash](#)** from the apartments of Partha's close aide **[Arpita Mukherjee](#)** and arrested her. Both of them have been in jail. Partha's arrest shook the TMC, even as the seizure of such massive stashes of cash, whose videos went viral, shocked the people of the state.

On August 11, the CBI arrested a close Mamata aide **[Anubrata Mondal](#)**, the TMC's Birbhum district president, over a cattle smuggling case. On September 7, the CBI conducted raids and search operations at the premises of several Mondal associates.

On September 3, the Halisahar municipality chairman and TMC leader, **[Raju Sahani, was arrested](#)** in a chit fund case. A day later, the **[CBI raided the houses](#)** of TMC MLA Subodh Adhikari and his brother and Kanchrapara municipality chairman Kamal Adhikari in the same case.

Recently, the TMC **[Rajya Sabha](#)** MP and former Union culture secretary, **[Jawhar Sircar, admitted](#)** that "a section of the TMC was completely rotten" and that the party could not fight the saffron party in the 2024 **[Lok Sabha](#)** elections with the help of such elements.

A fierce critic of the **[Narendra Modi](#)**-led BJP government at the Centre, Sircar said the visuals of piles of cash recovered from Arpita's houses were so outrageous that his family urged him to quit politics. "I couldn't believe it when I saw it on TV. So much money can come out of someone's house! Past imagination. Scenes of such corruption are rarely seen on TV," he reportedly said.

Sircar's remarks sparked a row even as he drew flak from within the TMC. Senior party MP Sougata Roy said, "Jawhar Sircar did not walk in a Trinamool procession even for a day before becoming a Rajya Sabha MP. There are no sacrifices. When he was secretary of the Ministry of Culture in **[Delhi](#)**, he did not do the Trinamool any favours." Calling Jawhar "selfish", he also charged, "They are all self-centred and act in

their own interests. When you get on a plane as an MP, get a salary of two lakh rupees a month, and leave during the party's difficult times!"

Hitting back, Jawhar said his family members and friends have urged him to quit politics, saying "I have never heard of this kind of insult in my life."

Amid increasing raids on its leaders by central agencies in connection with various scams, the TMC has cried foul, charging the BJP-led Centre with allegedly indulging in "vendetta" by using various agencies like "political weapons" against its rivals.

However, a major intellectual section seems to be getting disillusioned with the TMC now. A senior theatre actor, who was an active participant in Mamata's Singur-Nandigram movement, said, "Many like me have ethics and principles. So we had become part of this movement for a cause, but we cannot back the TMC now. The corruption cases against the TMC, especially the school jobs scam is very serious."

Some TMC leaders also referred to the point that in the wake of Mamata's resounding victory against the BJP in the 2021 polls, several prominent leaders from various parties, including [Yashwant Sinha](#), Pawan Verma and Ashok Tanwar, joined the party. "A few months ago, Verma and Tanwar resigned from TMC. In Tripura and [Goa](#) also, many of our leaders decided to quit although they had joined the party barely a year ago," said a TMC leader. "We have suffered a loss of face in the intelligentsia class that had returned to our camp ahead of the 2021 polls. Various corruption cases and Rs 50 crore cash recovery from Partha Chatterjee's aide have severely dented our image."

During the 2021 polls, a section of the state's political parties had undertaken a "No vote to BJP" campaign, which had helped the TMC. The CPI(ML) Liberation's Partha Ghosh said, "We campaigned for 'No vote to BJP'. But we cannot support this TMC government. They are claiming that it is pro-people. Their slogan is

‘Ma Mati Manush’. But they are not clearing the dues of labourers under the MGNREGA scheme. Also, they are paying huge money to Durga Puja committees. This cannot be a policy of pro-people government. School jobs scam and other scandals showed how much this government has sunk into corruption. We have to now fight against both the BJP and TMC and strengthen the Left forces.”