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# 'BJP's Hindutva is antithetical to Bengal's ethos': Jawhar Sircar

Trinamool will be with the INDIA bloc, says the Rajya Sabha MP.

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Jawhar Sircar delivers a lecture in Kolkata, June 2022. | Photo Credit: PTI

As the Trinamool Congress stood poised to win with a massive victory over the BJP in the Lok Sabha election in West Bengal, Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP and former CEO of Prasar Bharati, Jawhar Sircar took time out to talk to *Frontline* and share his views on the triumph. According to him, the monolith, Hindi Hindu Hindutva, which Modi was

banking on, “has cracked up”. “Trinamool and the DMK’s [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] victories showed one thing: essentially, those who fought back are the ones who won.”

Excerpts from an interview:

**As in the 2021 Assembly election, Trinamool seems to have defied all odds, refuted all calculations and contradicted what the exit polls predicted. As we speak, it is leading in 29 seats, and the BJP has been reduced to around 12, six less than what it won in 2019. What is the reason behind this massive mandate?**

Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have never hidden their visceral hatred for Bengal. Being very myopic in their education and world view, they look at the world outside the north Indian belt with scorn. They may try to hide that, but when it comes to States such as Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, their hatred comes to the fore. I am using the word hatred after careful consideration, because we have empirical proof of what constitutes hatred. On a lame excuse they decided to starve West Bengal of funds. This angered the people of Bengal. Their attempt was to divert the anger of the people towards Trinamool, saying that the party was not able to provide rural employment. But Trinamool managed to capitalise on it, and convincingly point out that it was actually the Centre’s fault.

They also purposely posted judges to the High Court who would not show strength and vigour in BJP-ruled States as they demonstrated in Bengal. They have served the purpose of carrying on ‘the great scheme.’ The judiciary’s role has also been a factor for the BJP’s loss, because people have seen through it. Take the case of Abhijit Gangopadhyay, a second-class graduate of a non-descript law college, who made it as a judge pretty late. All his bravado, supported by one of the mainstream media houses, completely rebounded. He thought he had become a rock star in the eyes of the people. He joined the BJP within a day of resigning. People are not fools. They saw through it all. There is another judge, who on the day of his resignation admitted that he was an RSS *swayamsevak*, and that he wanted to go back. In short, the High Court is perceived by the people of Bengal to be unduly biased against the State government.

Another factor is the regime of the Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation, and the Income Tax department working as a parallel Union government. The density of officers stationed in Bengal, and the way they pick up local cases such as

in the Panchayat—something they would not dare to do in a place like Uttar Pradesh—has alienated people.

Then, their use of central forces backfired. By increasing the area of BSF [Border Security Force] and others to cover almost half of Bengal and to put in Central forces with every BJP leader of consequence—each one going around with gun-toting personnel as a status symbol—sent a negative message to the people. The elongated process of elections further exasperated the people.

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**🗨️ You spoke of the attitude of some of the Calcutta High Court judges. But time and again we have seen that allegations of corruption and misrule have not been a major factor in the electoral politics of West Bengal. How do you explain Trinamool winning so many seats in spite of the School Service Commission scam, the PDS scam, the Sandeshkhali allegations?**

**🗨️** Ask the BJP how it has managed to strengthen its position in Madhya Pradesh after the mother of all scams, the Vyapam scam. The scams in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh of the sugar cane lobby are so dreadful that people have even stopped filing cases. Compared to the major scams that have taken place, we are looking at minor, localised scams [in Bengal]. India exported 98 million tonnes of oil products in 2021-22; and exported almost the same amount, 98.5 million tonnes in 2022-23. India got \$67 billion for the first export; and for the sanctioned year, the year of the Ukraine war, India got \$97 billion. I put it in writing to the ministers repeatedly, but nobody has answered it. This means a \$30 billion profit went to two Gujarat-based private sector units.

Take the case of the Adani shipment from Indonesia. He bought very inferior grade coal, jacked up the price when the shipment was underway, and sold it at an exorbitant price. He has fleeced Indians at double and triple the price. I have placed these on record; but the Modi media is too terrified to broach these topics. Essentially these Central investigating agencies have been turned into the BJP's biting poodles. India is seeing scam after scam for which a different kind of generic treatment is required.

As far as Sandeshkhali is concerned—I have been a magistrate there and know the territory well—the illegal land grab may have taken place, but the charges of molestation

against women was largely a conspiracy. In the eyes of the people, it was Trinamool who was the victim.

**🗨️ We have two contrasting pictures so far in two neighbouring states, Odisha and West Bengal. Both are ruled by regional parties. Yet the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) appears to be losing. What was the difference in West Bengal?**

**🗨️** The people in Bengal have gone through a period of enlightenment, the Bengal Renaissance, exactly 220 years old today. Nobody asks stupid questions like 'which caste you belong to' in Bengal. Odisha does not have this tradition. Odisha is in a position to compromise with casteist, retrograde, social parties. BJP's Hindutva is antithetical to Bengal's ethos..

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**🗨️ Mamata Banerjee fought against the Congress and the Left in the State, but has remained a part of the INDIA bloc. What do you think will be your party's next step at the Centre?**

**🗨️** Trinamool will surely be with the alliance, but Mamata Banerjee has been very, very badly hurt, and she makes no bones about it. In Bengal, if the Left-Congress had come to an understanding with Mamata, then the BJP would have been reduced to less than five seats in the State. What is sad is that the Left, that has a philosophy of depth that is 100 years old, will come up with one or two MPs. This is the Left's strategic mistake.


**🗨️ The BJP has been projecting the Lok Sabha election here as a State election that will determine who will come to power in Bengal. Do you think the BJP is finished in Bengal?**


**🗨️** No. The BJP will remain as the main opposition party for some more time, and you can't wish it away. While it is a big political blow for the BJP, the bigger blow is for those who were celebrating the demise of the Trinamool. Trinamool and the DMK's victories showed one thing: have your social compass clear. Understand who your enemy is. And be prepared to fight. Essentially, those who fought back are the ones who won. The election shows that the monolith called 'Hindi Hindu Hindutva', which Modi was banking on, has cracked up.


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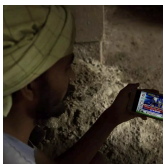
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