

TMC vs TMC: Jawhar Sircar's Comments on Corruption Draw Fierce Response From Saugata Roy

Snigdhendu Bhattacharya

Kolkata: Trinamool Congress (TMC) Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar faced a verbal attack from his party colleague and Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy after the former expressed in a [recent interview](#) his discomfort over the raft of corruption charges that his party has faced.

Roy – a former Union minister who first became an MP in 1977 – called Sircar “selfish”, “self-centred” and one “who never cared for anything but personal interests”. Roy even dared Sircar to relinquish his Rajya Sabha berth to “stop enjoying the benefits”.

The controversy started on Monday, August 29, after Sircar [told](#) a Bengali TV channel that the humiliation he faced from family and friends in the aftermath of the recovery of cash from a female associate of suspended TMC heavyweight [Partha Chatterjee](#) was unprecedented in his life.

“When we first saw it, we could not believe our own eyes. Recovery of such a huge amount of cash was unimaginable. Irrespective of political parties, such scenes of corruption have been rare on TV. Besides, there was the question of association with another person... there was a moral issue. People were bound to comment. This cannot be stopped. My family immediately asked me to quit... Rajya Sabha, politics altogether,” Sircar had said.

He had added that his friends jokingly asked him why was he still with the party and how much money he had received. “I have never faced such humiliation,” the former bureaucrat, who became a Rajya Sabha MP in August 2021, had said.

“This way of making limitless money with help of the stamp of a political party, buying apartments for a female friend, purchasing SUVs, these cannot be accepted, tolerated. This practice of loot was absent in our culture,” he had said.

According to Sircar, he entered politics seeing the 2021 Bengal assembly election result as a “beacon of hope” against the Narendra Modi-led Union government. He identifies BJP as a “fascist-communalist” force, with which no compromise could be made. “I have not come (to politics) for money. I receive a pension. If I cannot maintain self-esteem, I'll quit,” he had said.

Also read: [TMC May Have Sacked Partha Chatterjee. But Its Problems With Corruption Run Deep](#)

He had said that there was a class of people in politics – cutting across all parties – who come across as “opportunists and corrupt by their very appearance”. “If such people are not excluded, the battle for 2024 will be difficult with one part of the body rotten,” he had said.

While the party has disassociated itself from Chatterjee's deeds, it has, as of now, backed the other jailed leader, Anubrata Mandal – who is being probed in connection with a cattle smuggling case. Chief minister Mamata Banerjee has extended support in advance to minister [Firhad Hakim](#), anticipating that he could become the next target of central agencies.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Photo: PTI/File

Saugata Roy hits out

In this context, as Sircar's remarks went viral, Saugata Roy launched a scathing attack on him, also while speaking to a TV channel. "He [Sircar] is feeling socially demoralised. He alone has a social position? None of us have it? He should better quit. We will be relieved. We will elect someone else in the by-election. He will still be lucky... he will be receiving the Rajya Sabha pension. But he will stop enjoying the benefits," said Roy.

Taking a dig at the Rajya Sabha MP, Roy said, "The likes of Sircar never cared for anything but personal interest. He never walked in any TMC rally before becoming a Rajya Sabha member. He has made no sacrifice. He never helped anyone from the TMC during his tenure as India's culture secretary."

Roy even said that bureaucrats like Sircar – "who never helped anyone, never stood by any person in trouble" – were likely to take benefits from association with a party as long as it enjoyed a good time.

"It's okay as long as they can take the Rs 2 lakh salary and make flight trips at will. During the party's difficult time, they will criticise and find ways to quit... He is saying he wants to talk eye to eye with Modi. Who listens to him? What political influence does he have?" asked Roy. He thinks that the party should take disciplinary action against Sircar.

The Wire tried to speak to several TMC leaders and spokespersons, but all of them declined to add any further comment. One Lok Sabha MP, speaking on the condition of anonymity, claimed that a majority of the party's senior leaders were "unhappy" with Sircar's comments. However, there seemed to be no likelihood of any disciplinary action against either Sircar or Roy at present, the leader said.

Also read: [Corruption-Struck TMC Readies for Biggest Challenge: Ensuring Violence-Free Panchayat Polls](#)

"The party took prompt and strong action against Chatterjee. Sircar should have highlighted how we set an example with our actions against him. He should have highlighted how the central agencies are being used to harass leaders of not only our parties but every opposition party. Instead, he chose to embarrass the party publicly. I personally think Roy's message had the party's backing and that the party wants everyone to stop airing personal views in the public," the Lok Sabha MP said.

Later, on Wednesday evening, veteran TMC MLA who had served as Sircar's election agent during the Rajya Sabha poll, told the media that Sircar leaving the party wouldn't impact the organisation in any way.

"Did he consult the chief minister before making these comments? He is fearing loss of public image. His social position increased after becoming a Rajya Sabha MP. Did he take his family's permission before accepting the Rajya Sabha nomination? I am feeling ashamed to think I was his election agent," said Roy.

He added that Sircar is an erudite but not a political person. "Neither was our 2021 battle dependent on him nor would the one for 2024 depend on him. His comments damaged the party, but he leaving the organisation wouldn't harm us," the former minister said.

The BJP's IT cell national chief Amit Malviya, who is also a co-in charge of the party's Bengal unit, was quick to grab the issue to take digs at both Sircar and the party.

In a tweet, Malviya wrote, "Imagine how bad it must be for Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, when even a lowlife like Jawahar Sircar (TMC Rajya Sabha MP), feels repulsed at the obscene amount of cash recovered from Partha Chatterjee's close aide's homes... His family wants him to quit the Chor Party TMC."

Sircar responded to Malviya in a tweet, saying, Malviya was "twisting facts". "I spoke against corruption in all parties, incl TMC and BJP. In @AITCOfficial (TMC), I could air my views — would anyone in BJP speak of rotten nexus between the Big Duo of BJP & of Big Business? Retail vs Corporate Corruption?" he wrote.

Speaking to *The Wire*, Sircar declined to comment on Roy's remarks or his future course of action with regard to political responsibilities. He said his struggle was wider in nature, starting when he resigned from Prasar Bharati in 2016.

"Since then, I have been openly combating both communalisation of politics and authoritarianism in governance — through every public platform. Even though I am not intrinsically political, I accepted Mamata Banerjee's offer to carry on the campaign to a higher level. We will not give up this struggle against communalism and authoritarianism ever — till we win or leave the world," he said.

Several TMC leaders embroiled in probes

At present, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) are investigating the school recruitment scam by order of a Calcutta high court bench, while the two central agencies are also probing the roles of different TMC leaders in a cattle smuggling case and a coal smuggling case.

Party national executive member [Anubrata Mandal](#) and his daughter are being investigated in connection with a cattle smuggling case, while chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew and TMC all-India general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, his wife and sister-in-laws' roles are being probed in connection with the coal smuggling case.

Krishna Kalyani, a BJP MLA who switched over to the TMC and was recently made the chairman of the public accounts committee in the state assembly, received a notice from the income tax department soon after getting his new post.

The chief minister has labelled the investigations against Abhishek and other senior leaders as "harassment" with a "political motive" as an attempt to destabilise the state government.

However, adding to the TMC's discomfort, a [petition](#) is still pending before Calcutta high court seeking the ED's investigation into the allegedly disproportionate rise in the properties of 19 TMC MPs, ministers and MLAs. Another petition has been filed by a BJP leader seeking an investigation into the assets of the chief minister's family members. The petition is yet to be heard.