

TMC MP Jawhar Sircar toes party line after remarks on corruption creates a flutter

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With one tweet on September 4, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar tried to put the controversy around his recent utterance on corruption in the party to rest.

“This is viral in Kolkata. Bengal knew it all along — behind his bluster and bullying — is the real Pappu! @AITCofficial@abhishekaitc,” the tweet said, along with a photograph of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on a T-shirt. After facing questions by the Enforcement Department for about six hours on September 2, Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee had targeted Mr. Shah and accused him of using investigative agencies against political opponents.

Mr. Sircar, who is facing flak from a section of his party for remarks on corruption, used the tweet not only to target the Union Home Minister but to mend fences with the party. The recent remarks by the bureaucrat-turned-politician have led to at least two Trinamool MPs, Saugata Roy and Santanu Sen, publicly demanding his resignation.

Speaking to a Bengali television news channel, Mr. Sircar a few days ago said that his family wanted him to quit politics and his friends had mocked him for being part of the Trinamool after the arrest of former Minister Partha Chatterjee in the School Service Commission recruitment scam.

Mr. Sircar was nominated to Rajya Sabha by the Trinamool in 2021. While nominating the former CEO of Prasar Bharati, West Bengal’s ruling party had stressed on his “42 years in public service” and while criticising Mr. Sircar, the MPs too referred to his career in bureaucracy. Making a sweeping statement, Dum Dum Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy said “bureaucrats are opportunists”.

While defending his remarks and fending off attacks from BJP’s Amit Malviya, Mr. Sircar wrote on Twitter on August 30, “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”.

While the issue of the Rajya Sabha MP’s remarks appears to be dying down, it has brought out larger questions regarding dissenting voices within Trinamool. Even in the past academicians and bureaucrats who had joined the Trinamool had voiced differing views on tricky issues like corruption.

At a time when Trinamool itself seems to be confused on the issue of corruption - it has stripped Mr. Chatterjee of ministerial responsibilities but has dithered on taking action against Anubrata Mondal who is behind bars - any mention of corruption from the lawmakers of the party is bound to draw flak.

Mr. Sircar is popular in the cultural spaces of the city and his lectures and debates draw a large audience. However, he may have bitten off more than he can chew with his views on corruption.