

TMC MP Jawhar Sircar to quit politics over doctor's murder, writes to Mamata

Tanmay Chatterjee

Trinamool Congress (TMC) Rajya Sabha member Jawhar Sircar, a retired bureaucrat, wrote to the party's chairperson and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday that he is going to resign from Parliament and also quit politics as he is unable to bear with corruption which, he said, has contributed to the mass outrage against the August 9 rape and murder of a junior doctor at a Kolkata hospital.



TMC Rajya Sabha MP Jawhar Sircar. (PTI File Photo)

People have lost confidence in the TMC government, Sircar wrote in the long two-page letter which was leaked to the media. He addressed Banerjee as “Dear madam chairperson.”

“Believe me, the present spontaneous outpouring of public anger is against this unchecked overbearing attitude of the favoured few and the corrupt. In all my years I have not seen such angst and total no-confidence against the government, even when it says something correct or factual,” Sircar wrote.

“I have suffered patiently for a month since the terrible incident at R G Kar Hospital and was hoping for your direct intervention with the agitating junior doctors, in the old style of Mamata Banerjee. It has not happened and whatever punitive steps that government is taking now are too little and quite late. I think normal may have been restored in this state much earlier, if the caucus of the corrupt doctors was smashed and those guilty of taking improper administrative actions punished immediately after the scandalous incident happened,” Sircar wrote, apparently pointing at the recent suspension of some doctors and health officials.

The former Prasar Bharati CEO, who joined TMC and became a Rajya Sabha member in August 2021, talked of leaving the party in 2022 as well after the Enforcement Directorate seized more than ₹50 crore in cash from a close aide of the then Bengal education minister Partha Chatterjee during investigation into the bribe-for-job scam in state-run schools. He was restrained by some senior leaders at that time.

Sircar is the second TMC Rajya Sabha member to raise his voice after the RG Kar Hospital incident. Sukhendu Sekhar Roy was the first to take part in a public agitation and express his personal opinions on social media. He was even summoned by the Kolkata police for claiming that sniffer dogs were not taken to the crime scene on time. The summon was withdrawn after Roy moved the Calcutta high court.

Sircar repeatedly focused on corruption in TMC in Sunday's letter.

"After 41 years in the IAS, I can live without embarrassment in a small middle-class flat, next to a big slum, and drive a very ordinary nine-year-old car. But I get amazed to see that several elected panchayat and municipal leaders have acquired big properties and move around in expensive vehicles. This hurts not only me, but the people of West Bengal," he wrote.

"It is also true that leaders in other parties and other states have amassed much more wealth, but West Bengal is unable to accept this extravagant corruption and domination. I know that the present Central regime thrives on the multi-billionaires that it has enriched and not a day goes when I do not accuse it of dirty crony-capitalism. I just cannot accept some things, like corrupt officers (or doctors) getting prime and top postings. No," Sircar wrote.

Sircar described the ongoing mass agitations as non-political and spontaneous.

"It is my belief that the mainstream of the agitation is non-political and a spontaneous one and it is not correct to take up confrontational stand by labelling it political. Of course, the opposition parties are trying to fish in troubled waters, but the mass of the youth and the common people who are out agitating on the streets every second day do not encourage them. They want no politics: they want justice and punishment," he wrote.

"Let us analyse frankly and realise that the movement is as much for Abhaya as it is against the state government and the party. This calls for course correction immediately or else communal forces will capture this state."

"I had to say all this in writing as I have not had the opportunity to speak privately with you in several months. I express my gratitude again for the opportunity you gave me to raise Bengal's issues in Parliament for three years, but I do not wish to continue as MP at all. My commitment to fight corruption, communalism and authoritarianism in the Centre and the states is simply non-negotiable."

"I shall go to Delhi soon and offer my resignation to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha and will also disassociate myself totally from politics. Please do something to save this state and my regards and best wishes are with you," Sircar said in the concluding para.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said: "Sircar has expressed his concern about certain issues. He has decided to quit. It is his prerogative. We want our leaders Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee to take some positive steps to address this mass grievance."

The Bharatiya Janata Party reiterated its demand for Mamata Banerjee's resignation after Sircar's letter became public.

"Sircar has done the right thing as a person with a conscience. People within TMC are now raising their voice, sending a message that Mamata Banerjee should step down," Samik Bhattacharya, Bengal BJP's chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member said.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury hailed Sircar.

"It is praiseworthy that a person has raised his concern for people of Bengal from within the ruling party. But I don't think it will have any effect," said Chowdhury.