



**E** My songs have kept me alive and kicking in Bollywood for so many years. I can do anything with my songs and this time I want the lotus to bloom with my music | **BAPPI LAHIRI**



# Dance of Democracy

**BATTLEGROUND BENGAL | 17 APR-12 MAY, 2014**

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## Moon Moon charm fails poll muhurat

Jaideep Mazumdar & Falguni Banerjee | TNN

**Bankura:** *Ei poth jodi na shesh hoy...* Moon Moon Sen doesn't want the (new) road she's taken to end. And she frequently invokes her Ma—the legendary Suchitra Sen—and mentor Mamata Banerjee to appeal to the 'maanush' of Bankura to see her through the journey. Moon Moon crooned the popular song from her mother's film 'Saptapadi' but the oomph was missing from the muhurat of her political campaign at



Mejia, about 35km north of Bankura town, on a sweltering Tuesday morning.

The 'first day, first show' didn't quite generate the hype it was expected to. Billed as a party workers' meeting-cum-public rally, it failed to meet the mark of either.

Not that Moon Moon didn't try hard

### Barely 2,000 People Attend Actress' First Campaign Rally In Bankura



enough. At 66, she looked as charming as ever in a light orange chiffon saree and kept reminding the 2,000-odd people who had gathered that she was Suchitra Sen's daughter. The stage on the Mejia football grounds had a large portrait of Suchitra.

Moon Moon began by offering floral tributes to her mother and flashed a victory sign as '*Ei poth jodi na shesh hoy*' started playing on the public address system.

Moon Moon flashed a brilliant smile and latched on to this song to ask Bankura's people to elect her to Lok Sabha. "I'm hearing this song after a long time. Just as in the song, I want this road that I have taken on Mamata Banerjee's guid-

ance to be an unending one," she said. "I've come here as Suchitra Sen's daughter. I am from a different world, the film world. But I have known hard work and now am here to work for all of you," she told the gathered in accented Bangla.



For Moon Moon Sen, it was all about her mother Suchitra Sen and Mamata Banerjee at the party workers' meeting-cum-public rally in Mejia on Tuesday

Moon Moon invoked Suchitra as much as she did Mamata. "When my mother was in hospital, a lady told me that she understood her decision to lead a secluded life. She told me that the iconic Uttam-Suchitra duo was deeply embedded in the Bengali psyche and as a Bengali, she just couldn't stay away from the hospital. That lady, Mamata Ba-



nerjee, was a pillar of strength and support. Her warmth and concern touched me. She would just a pillow to make my mother more comfortable," said the actress.

"Mamata Banerjee has been fighting like a man for the development of Bengal. Now, I have joined the fight as her follower," she declared.

Trinamool Chhatra Parishad chief Shankudeb Panda was seen giving her talking tips all through. Taking on critics who lampoon film stars' entry into politics, Moon Moon said: "There are many who ask what film stars can do for the people. We, actors, work very hard. Film stars are not fools, film stars are not cheap".

Moon Moon Sen, who graduated from Oxford, admitted that it was "beyond her imagination that there could be any place in the world without water". She was referring to the acute water crisis in Bankura. Later, speaking to TOI, Moon Moon said that if elected, water supply would be her topmost priority. She said her commitment to Bankura would be a lifelong one.

But her charm did not work with the crowds on Tuesday. Invoking Suchitra Sen also did not seem to elicit any response. The only time there was a buzz was when she mentioned Mamata. Worrying signs for Trinamool when Moon Moon is pitted against nine-time CPM MP Basudeb Acharya. He has never been defeated in Bankura in 34 years.

## TMC workers heckle EC officials

Rupak Banerjee | TNN

**Howrah:** An election commission (EC) team making rounds to pull down political posters from government properties was allegedly manhandled by Trinamool supporters in Howrah on Tuesday. Trinamool workers, on the other hand, accused the squad leader, Soumen Acharya, of targeting only Trinamool banners.

Around noon, Acharya took an 11-member team to Swami Vivekananda Road under Shibpur police station to remove political banners on government properties. Acharya alleged that while removing posters from lamp posts and telephone wires, a group of Trinamool activists attacked him. The EC team's video recording cassette was also snatched away. Soon, tension spread in the area and police rushed to the spot. Acharya was rescued from the agitated mob. On the basis of Acharya's complaint, Howrah SDO Baniprasad Das—who was the assistant re-



A police officer intervene as Trinamool workers manhandle EC official Soumen Acharya (circled) in Howrah on Tuesday

turning officer—filed an FIR at Shibpur police station against "unknown Trinamool activists".

"On basis of the complaint, a police enquiry has been initiated," DC (headquarter) Nishat Pervez said. Howrah district returning officer and district magistrate Subhanjan Das added: "A report will be sent to the election commission."

Howrah district president of Trinamool and state minister

Arup Roy said: "The person in question wasn't impartial. The team consisted of members of a Leftist committee. He targeted Trinamool banners specifically. This generated public anger. I have shown no bias and I was about to take off all the flags and posters before I was attacked."

According to local residents, there were several plexes of Mamata Banerjee and Prasun Banerjee in the area. While the removal was on, Howrah

Municipality Corporation MmC Binodananda Banerjee, councillor Bishwanath Das and Trinamool leader Indranil Chatterjee were passing by in a car. Seeing the removal process, they protested. Das said: "We saw he was taking off only Trinamool posters whereas CPM flags were left intact. Seeing this, the workers got agitated. They demanded to know the reason for partiality. When we challenged his authority, he couldn't even produce an identity card. But he wasn't heckled, the workers verbally protested."

However, Acharya said: "I was carrying a letter from the DM but I haven't yet got the EC card. So I couldn't show them. I was pushed around and the video disk was forcibly taken away. I have shown no bias and I was about to take off all the flags and posters before I was attacked."

The DM reacted: "It's a serious allegation. Since the video has been snatched, we can't easily identify the accused. There were reportedly 250 supporters."

## Govt officers want more security after BDO row

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** In the wake of an assault bid on Habra BDO, around 40 WBCS officers of five sub-divisions on Tuesday met North 24-Parganas DM Sanjay Bansal and demanded tight security arrangement for government officials.

Sources said the officers raised the issue out of insecurity over the alleged assault on BDO Dinabandhu Gayen. Gayen was part of the meeting that lasted over of half an hour. While the officers refused to talk to reporters, Bansal claimed the meeting was a customary one. "It was an official meeting. The officers raised the issue of security arrangement. I had a discussion with the SP and he has assured me of beefing up the security."

The officers reportedly said they were now afraid to take action against model code violations following the Habra BDO assault. That the attackers went "scot-free" also worried them.

Sources said the officers requested that there be adequate police protection for them, both before and after raids. The



DM Sanjay Bansal with SP Tanmoy Roy Chowdhury at the press meet on Tuesday

DM and SP assured them that the administration will beef up the security arrangement for all officers on duty.

In view of the recent spate of attacks on officials, special security measures were also discussed and some suggestions were noted down. "We want to do our duty but we can't carry out the job if we are under constant threat. We raised this issue and were told that our cover will be made stronger. Some ideas were also discussed and exchanged," an officer said.

## Cops crack down on bike rallies, 3 held

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Basarat:** At a time when the model code of conduct is being violated at will and the role of the administration is being questioned for not taking proper action, the North 24-Parganas police have started cracking down on bike rallies by stopping two campaign rallies in Basirhat Town. Police even seized 21 bikes of party cadres and detained three persons. Locals, who raise protests several times to get rid of bike gang menace, termed it as a 'bold step'.

On Monday evening, police were tipped off a bike rally at Ghona in Basirhat in the sup-

**We will take stern action if the election code of conduct is violated in any way. As far as bike rallies are concerned, we won't allow them till the end of the election**

**Tanmoy Roy Chowdhury**  
NORTH 24-PARGANAS SP

port of Basirhat's Trinamool candidate Idrish Ali. "After being informed, a police team rushed to the spot and stopped the rally. Around 11 motorbikes were seized and two Trinamool supporters were detained while many of them fled the spot following the raid," a senior district police official said.

Barely an hour after the first raid, another police team conducted a raid at Gachha where a Left Front bike rally was taken out in the support of CPI candidate Nurul Huda. After stopping the rally, police seized all 10 bikes and picked up a CPI supporter.

North 24-Parganas SP Tanmoy Roy Chowdhury said such raids will be continued till the end of the Lok Sabha polls.

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## Audit slips for Jadavpur voters

Ajanta Chakraborty | TNN

**Kolkata:** Voters of Jadavpur will be the first in the state to get voter acknowledgment slips this Lok Sabha election. The election commission (EC) has chosen Jadavpur as the only parliamentary constituency in Bengal to try out the voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) system.

VVPAT or verified paper record (VPR) is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballot-less system. A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction and provide means to audit the stored electronic results.

"Jadavpur is among the few constituencies chosen across the country for generating an acknowledgment slip every time a vote is cast on the EVM," an EC official said. Around six other parliamentary constituencies have been selected for in-



CONFIRM YOUR VOTE

roducing the VVPAT this election.

EVMs in 1,959 polling booths in Jadavpur constituency, comprising seven Assembly segments—Tollygunge, Jadavpur, Bhangar, Sonarpur North and South and Baruipur East and West. The commission has requisitioned 2,600 VVPAT machines for Bengal.

The EC will introduce the VVPAT system countrywide on an experimental basis to ensure fair elections. The slip, which will come out of the EVM soon after a voter

casts his vote, will show which symbol and candidate the vote has gone to. The slip will be automatically dropped in a sealed box attached to the EVMs for use by the EC.

The commission has placed an order for about 20,000 VVPAT machines to be selectively deployed in states. The machines have been developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd, Bangalore, and Electronics Corporation of India Ltd. A team of EC officials will be trained on VVPAT. Explaining the system, the EC official said, "The VVPAT machine will be installed inside the voting compartment and connected to the EVM. On pressing the EVM button, a monitor will display the voter's serial number and the name of the candidate he has voted for. The information will be transmitted for printing. The printed paper, stored in a sealed compartment inside the VVPAT, will be counted against the serial number."

A voter can lodge a complaint with the presiding officer if the VVPAT displays a candidate's name he has not voted for.

## Choppers go out of bounds for 'poor' TMC

Saibal Gupta | TNN

**Kolkata:** Unable to get a chopper on time, Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee had reached the meeting venue in West Midnapore three hours late on Monday. And on Tuesday, Mamata opted out of another chopper ride—this time to for another party meeting in Agartala—since she "couldn't afford" it.

"I wanted to travel by helicopter as that would have saved time. It takes two-and-a-half hours to travel by road from the airport to the meeting venue. However, I backed out after being asked to pay Rs 76 lakh," she said at a public rally at Shantinagar in Tripura on Tuesday.

How much does a chopper ride actually cost? According to sources, the cost varies according to size and the aircraft preferred. "The cost of a double-engine helicopter varies from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 3 lakh per hour, depending on the capacity and comforts. VVIPs like Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi travel by double-engined helicopters that are con-

CHOPPER	SEATER	CHARGES*
Agusta 139	7	₹1.5L-1.8L
Bell 429	7	₹1.3L-1.5L
Eurocopter 135	4	₹1.2L-1.3L
Bel 412	6	₹1.2L
Bel 406	4	₹75K-90K
Agusta 119	4	₹75K-80K

\*Per hour

sidered safer. The rent of a single-engine helicopter varies between Rs 75,000 and Rs 1.3 lakh. In addition, the hirer has to pay Rs 20,000 as handling cost, airport rent and ferry charge. Ferry charge is the sum that is required to be paid if the helicopter flies from its base to the operational area. The accommodation of the pilot and the crew has to be taken care of

**PAY A PREMIUM, SAVE TIME**



as well. Even the cheapest aircraft comes for a few lakhs per day," a source revealed.

Trinamool may have tightened its purse string but the Congress or the BJP aren't complaining. They are sticking to their chopper plans to make most of the busy poll season. However, arrangements for leaders like Narendra Modi

and Rahul Gandhi are made from Delhi. "After the campaign schedule is finalised, we send the tour plan and preferable mode of conveyance. The rest is arranged by the high command," Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said, adding: "There is every possibility that top leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Jairam Ramesh and P Chidambaram will come for poll campaigns but this will only be between the third and the fifth phase."

According to BJP state president Rahul Sinha, arrangements for Modi's next visit to Bengal will have to be arranged from Kolkata. "During Modi's last visit to Kolkata, the arrangements were made by Delhi. However, when he comes to Siliguri next time, we will have to make the arrangements. Modi is also likely to visit Kolkata and surrounding areas in the last phase. There will also be other leaders like Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj but the details of their visits are yet to be finalised," he said.