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Mamata Banerjee's paintbrush fetched TMC Rs 6.47 crore in two years

Kolkata | Published: Apr 29 2014 16:07 IST

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SUMMARY

Trinamool Congress has earned nearly Rs 6.47 crore from the sale of Mamata Banerjee's painting, the subject of a bitter exchange between Mamata and Narendra Modi.

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In the last two years, the Trinamool Congress has earned nearly Rs 6.47 crore from the sale of Mamata Banerjee's paintings, the subject of a bitter exchange between Mamata and Narendra Modi.

A balance sheet of the party submitted to the Election Commission shows her paintings fetched Rs 2.53 crore in 2012-2013 and just under Rs 3.94 crore the previous year. In 2010-2011, which was before her party came to power, no Mamata painting was sold, show copies of the three balance sheets accessed by The Indian Express.

◆ If the Election Commission feels it necessary, it will ask for a breakup of the list. As of now, there has been no intimation to us, ◆ said Amit Bhattacharya, officer on special duty at the office of the West Bengal chief electoral officer.

Girish N Pande, chief commissioner of income tax in Kolkata, said the EC would send the department the details after the elections. ◆ The EC will send us these financial statements and accounts and if we find anything we need to probe, we will, ◆ he said.

Modi questioned Sunday how one Mamata painting could fetch Rs 1.80 crore. The state leadership of the BJP and the Congress, too, have alleged chit fund companies were among the buyers of the paintings.

◆ The buyers are owners of chit fund companies and some unscrupulous industrialists who paid heavy amounts to the chief minister who became such a celebrated painter overnight. We demand that the list of buyers be put up on the public domain, ◆ said Congress state president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

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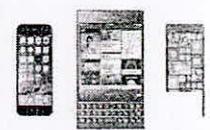
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BJP state president Rahul Sinha said this is a route the CM has taken to legalise black money. ♦ This is money collected from chit fund companies which the party is showing as sale of paintings. We want to know how the paintings were sold. Through auction or at random? ♦ he said.

CPI(M) leader Md Selim said, ♦ More than anything, they are painting black money into white. ♦

The statements, with covering letters of the party general secretary Mukul Roy along with the auditor ♦s report, show that in two years after the party came into power, sale of its annual magazine too shot up ♦ from Rs 3,79,280 in 2010-11 to Rs 12,64,319 and Rs 10,70,230 in the subsequent two years.

Painter ♦s proceeds

* 2010-11: No sale

* 2011-12: Rs 3,93,90,000

* 2012-13: Rs 2,53,00,000

* Total: Rs 6,46,90,000

(As per balance sheet submitted to EC)

- Arshad Ali

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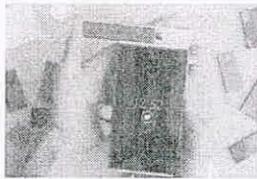
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Paintings sold, TMC 'forgot' to pay NGO

SAMBIT SAHA

Calcutta, April 29: The Trinamul Congress forgot to hand over the proceeds from the sale of Mamata Banerjee's paintings to the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) despite the chief minister making a promise in public more than a year ago, a party official told The Telegraph this evening.

The Trinamul official, who declined to be quoted by name, was responding to a series of questions from this newspaper after the IICP said that it had not received any donation from the party since 2004.

Trinamul has been defending the painting sales that fetched crores by saying that the proceeds were given to charity, including to the "Spastics Society", and used in election work.

But the IICP, known as the Spastic Society of Eastern India till 1999, said it had received only Rs 50,000 from sale of Mamata's paintings in 2004. Shortly before that, an IICP official said, it had received Rs 25,000 and a painting by Mamata but the official could not recollect the year.

The Trinamul official said the painting and the Rs 25,000 were given in 2005.

Both versions suggest that the proceeds from the painting sales immediately before Mamata became chief minister and after she assumed power did not go to the IICP. The bulk of the sales was reported from events organised in April 2011 — less than two months before Mamata became chief minister — and in January 2013.

On February 7, 2013, soon after CPM leader Surjya Kanta Mishra wondered aloud "who bought the paintings and at what price", Mamata had said at Writers' Buildings: "From the funds raised from the exhibition (at the Townhall annexe), I have decided to donate Rs 10 lakh to the governor's relief fund and Rs 25 lakh to the chief minister's relief fund. I will give Rs 5 lakh each to our three candidates contesting the by-elections. The rest of the money would go to the Spastics Society."

The statement would mean that other than Rs 50 lakh, the remaining amount from the exhibition proceeds should have gone to the IICP.

Subhra Chatterjee, deputy director of IICP, said this evening after being contacted by this newspaper: "Mamata Banerjee has been nice to us. The painting (given earlier) is still there in my room. But the IICP has not received any donation, either in cash or kind, from her after she became the chief minister as being mentioned in some places."

She added: "If it (Spastics Society) means us, we received (donation) last in 2004 and nothing thereafter." Chatterjee could not readily confirm whether there was any other organisation bearing the name of Spastic Society in the city.

The Trinamul official also did not say that the chief minister meant some other organisation.

Asked about the promise made by the chief minister more than a year ago, the Trinamul official said: "It slipped our mind. The IICP will definitely get it but after the election because we don't want to make it a poll issue right now. We want to fight the election on the plank of development."

Trinamul all-India general secretary Mukul Roy had said yesterday: "Every time, the amount we received from such exhibitions has been given for a social cause. In 2004, the amount was given to Spastics Society."

Roy's version matches with that of the IICP as far as the year 2004 is concerned. Multiple attempts to contact Roy tonight for a comment on the chief minister's promise were unsuccessful.

IICP's Chatterjee, who looks after the communication and resource mobilisation part of the organisation, recalled that Mamata came to their office unannounced and spent time with the children once.

"She came and tied rakhi. Later after becoming CM, she also invited our children to some government programmes, notably Children's Film Festival," she said.

The Trinamul source indicated that the IICP was likely to get Rs 20 lakh from the exhibition at the Town Hall annexe.

However, going by the source's own "offhand" estimate that "over Rs 2 crore" was raised, the IICP should be given at least Rs 1.5 crore after deducting the Rs 50 lakh earmarked by the chief minister for other causes.

Documents submitted by Trinamul to the Election Commission do not show the funds raised through the sale of paintings in January 2013, according to sources in Delhi.

The Trinamul complaint against Narendra Modi for his alleged defamatory statement on Mamata included an income and expenditure statement for 2011-2012, the sources said.

The sources said the statement mentioned an income of Rs 3.939 crore from the "sale of paintings", out of the party's total income of Rs 10.56 crore for that financial year.

The proceeds from the Townhall annexe exhibition are expected to feature in the audited report of 2012-13. The figure Rs 3.939 crore could then possibly indicate the proceeds from the exhibition at Galerie 88 in April 2011.

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Details of Mamata Banerjee's painting sales are in public domain: Trinamool

TNN | 16/01/2014, 02:12 AM IST

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KOLKATA: The CBI probe into Saradha boss Sudipta Sen's alleged buying of Mamata Banerjee's paintings for a hefty sum has drawn flak from Trinamool. Party national spokesperson Derek O'Brien refuted the TOI report on Tuesday, giving a detailed account of the sale proceeds of Mamata's paintings through exhibitions.



Mamata Banerjee

The Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP said that "money was received by cheque, and all payments have been duly and faithfully reported to the tax authorities at the end of the given financial year."

"Art exhibitions are open to all. The sale of paintings is an innovative and honest means of raising funds for a political party and for political and social activism. There was and is nothing cloak-and-dagger about these transactions. The exhibitions have taken place in full public view and all the information regarding the sales is in the public domain," Derek said. However, the Trinamool leader didn't take the responsibility of all those who bought the paintings from the public show.

TOI had reported on Tuesday that CBI is securing details from the income tax department on purchase of one of Mamata's paintings by Sudipta Sen, reportedly for Rs 1.8 crore.

Providing 'details' of the sale of Mamata's paintings, which is now under CBI lens, the Trinamool statement said: "The first such exhibition was held in 2005. Paintings were priced at Rs 10,000-20,000. The second exhibition was held in 2007. Paintings were priced at roughly Rs 100,000. From the proceeds of these and subsequent exhibitions/sales, contributions of Rs 1 crore were made to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and Rs 10 lakh to the Governor's Relief Fund. Assistance was also provided to the victims of police and CPM brutality in Nandigram and other places."



Mamata Banerjee looks at her painting, which she drew on the stage during the inaugural program of North Bengal festival at Siliguri's Kanchenjunga Stadium, on January 1, 2013. (TOI photo by Kaushik Roy)

The third exhibition was held in 2011, it said. "Artworks apart, 127,000 picture postcards and 10,000 catalogues were sold at Gallerie 88 in Kolkata. The paintings were priced by the organisers, accordingly, at Rs 2-3 lakh. Rs 60 lakh were used to purchase of these proceeds to

