

# Trust formed by Amartya Sen praises TMC government's public outreach programmes



Kolkata, July 23 (PTI) Pratichi (India) Trust, an organisation set up by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to ensure holistic development among the rural populace and impart education, has commended the Mamata Banerjee government of West Bengal for its "speedy and proactive way of action" in resolving issues in recent times. The twin initiatives — 'Didi Ke Bolo' (Tell Didi) and 'Duare Sarkar (government at doorsteps ) programmes, launched in 2019 and 2020 respectively, have enabled people to lodge their complaints much more than what they used to do earlier, a Pratichi survey report, Governance as 'Action-oriented' Listening: People's Voice and Policy Choice, said. Banerjee is referred to as Didi (elder sister) by the people of Bengal and through the 'Didi Ke Bolo' platform people reached out to her with suggestions for the government, or the Trinamool Congress party, and grievances that they would like the government or the party to address. "With the introduction of this system they do not need to find out the office concerned for redressal," the report said. Copy of the recently released report was made available to PTI on Friday. The Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC), set up in 2019, under the aegis of the Chief Minister's Office, Government of West Bengal, has emerged as a novel governance project in the country as a technology-based (ICT enabled) platform for public grievance redressal. "Over a short span of one and a half years, the cell appears to have dealt with more than ten lakhs of grievances through online and around 2.75 crore people through camp mode ("Duare Sarkar") with an impressive record of 95 per cent grievance resolution rate," the report said. The Trinamool Congress administration had launched the 'Duare Sarkar' drive in December last to deliver benefits of at least 11 state-run welfare schemes to the people. Pointing out that a higher number of people are reached through this system, the report said people who could not come to the institutionalised infrastructure to avail entitlements now can access the infrastructure better, it said. Observing the participation of women in airing their grievances is almost 45 per cent even though most of the households are headed by men, the survey said such figure "indicates women's interest in claiming their rights and entitlements". "A close analysis of the categories of grievances also reveals a large proportion women respond and react to a plethora of schemes specially designed for women including programmes such as 'Kanyashree'," it said. "Kanyashree" is a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at improving the status and well being of the girl child by incentivising schooling of teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18. Complimenting the "Pathoshree" programme, launched on October 1, 2020, the report said "under this initiative little over 14,000 km of roads have been reconstructed and repaired in comparatively inaccessible parts of the state". The survey said 'Didi Ke Bolo' played an active role in addressing the concerns of citizens during the COVID-induced lockdown, including facilitating the return of a large number of migrants from various states of the country. "Also, the state was witness to a severe and widespread devastation caused by cyclone Amphan. Rising up to the unprecedented challenges that followed, the Cell took up prompt measures to ameliorate woes of people. About 0.3 million people in the state were given assistance through this initiative," it said. Drawing on the "positive changes" ushered in by the new ICT based redressal initiatives, it said traditionally the old system of addressing public grievances was both time-consuming and resource-intensive, causing a "trust deficit' in governance while the complaints were registered sporadically. People were not aware of specific and authentic authority for redressal of their specific grievances and in many cases it had been seen that issues of specific area had not been settled or resolved in departments concerned, the report said. However, the survey felt reaching out to the most marginalised communities perhaps needs a more carefully designed communication strategy, "since due to their spatial disadvantages they are often denied their entitlement and rights". "On the other hand, they can't articulate their voices because of the myriad barriers including their languages and lack of access to ICT tools," it said. Pratichi (India) trust, a non-profit body set up with the Nobel prize money of Prof Amartya Sen, works in the areas of health, education with special emphasis on gender equality, and poverty alleviation in the country, particularly in eastern India. PTI SUS MM MM

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