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Top India politician Jayalalitha jailed for corruption

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One of India's most colourful and controversial politicians, Jayaram Jayalalitha, has been sentenced to jail for four years on corruption charges in a case that has lasted for 18 years.

The chief minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu was found guilty of amassing wealth of more than \$10m (£6.1m) which was unaccounted for.

She has to pay a 1bn rupee (\$16m; £10m) fine and resign as chief minister.

A former actress, her life has been marked by a series of high and lows.

The verdict was delivered by a special court in Bangalore amid tight security.

Along with three others, Jayalalitha was sentenced to an immediate jail term, and was due to be sent to Parappana Agrahara prison in Bangalore.

But she complained on chest pains and giddiness after the verdict was delivered, **the Times of India reported**, and was sent to the prison hospital for assessment.

Analysis: Andrew North, BBC News, Delhi

Many Indians will applaud the conviction of Tamil Nadu's chief minister - after years of evading justice - in the hope it is another move towards cleaning up the country's notoriously criminalised political system.

India's Supreme Court has tightened the noose, disqualifying from office any MP convicted of a serious crime and ordering fast-track trials to prevent them using their influence to string things out.

But there is no bar to the many politicians who continue to execute policy while facing charges that would see them immediately suspended in most other democracies, until either their innocence or guilt is proven.

New Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised cleaner government, yet just under one-third of the ministers he appointed face criminal charges, with one even accused of attempted murder.

India's Supreme Court recently ruled that while the constitution allows Mr Modi to do this, he should set a better example on who he appoints.



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The prosecution argued that Jayalalitha and three others committed an offence against society, **the Indian Express** reported.

The court has sentenced all four accused to four years in prison each, with Jayalalitha also facing a 1bn rupee fine (\$16m, £10m). The others have been ordered to pay a fine of about \$1.6m each.

If any of the four fail to pay their fine their jail sentence will be extended by a year.

It said that supporters of AIADMK party were forcibly dispersed by police as they tried to make their way to the court.

The BBC's Jill McGivering says that Jayalalitha is a legendary figure - a flamboyant former film star who has been central to south Indian politics for three decades.

Jayalalitha: Mercurial personality

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- A former actress, she appeared in more than 100 films
- Chief minister of Tamil Nadu on four occasions - from 1991-96, briefly in 2011, 2002-06 and 2011 to 2014
- Has alternated in power with her great rival, 90-year-old DMK leader M Karunanidhi
- Feted by various India prime ministers over the last 20 years trying to win her support
- Critics accuse her of establishing a personality cult, but supporters praise her poverty relief efforts
- Known for her extravagant lifestyle, police once discovered more than 10,000 saris and 750 pairs of shoes in a raid on her premises

Profile: Jayaram Jayalalitha

The corruption case focused on her personal wealth and was brought by a rival political party, Jayalalitha has always argued that it was politically motivated.

Known by her followers as Amma or Mother, she inspires intense loyalty, even adoration.

But she has been associated with a lavish lifestyle.

Her foster son's wedding almost 20 years ago broke world records for its sheer scale - including 150,000 guests.

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