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Jayalalithaa moves Karnataka HC against conviction; Panneerselvam sworn in as CM

The petition may be taken up on Tuesday during a scheduled hearing by a vacation bench

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S. Bridget Leena

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AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa is presently lodged in the Parappana Agrahara central jail in Bangalore. Photo: AFP

Chennai: Former Tamil Nadu chief minister (CM) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) chief **J. Jayalalithaa** on Monday appealed against a Bangalore special court's conviction order in the disproportionate assets case, as her trusted deputy **O. Panneerselvam** was sworn in as the new CM of the southern state.

AIADMK lawyers have filed an appeal in the Karnataka high court seeking suspension of the sentence, Tamil news channels reported. Since the high court is on an extended vacation, the case is likely to be taken up for hearing by a vacation bench on Tuesday. Jayalalithaa's close aide **Sasikala Natarajan**, **V.N. Sudhakaran** and **J. Ilavarasi** have also filed for bail.

Unless the conviction is overturned by a higher court, Jayalalithaa runs the risk of being barred from contesting elections for 10 years—four years while she is in jail and six after release. Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that a member of the legislative assembly (MLA) or member of Parliament (MP) would be automatically disqualified if he or she is convicted and imprisoned for two years or more.

Before this judgement, Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act which was struck down by the apex court, protected an elected representative from disqualification if they appealed before a higher court within three months.

Jayalalithaa was sentenced to a four-year imprisonment and a penalty of Rs.100 crore by the Bangalore special court. With the sentence, Jayalalithaa becomes the first serving chief minister to lose her post and go to jail. Natarajan, Ilavarasi and disowned foster son Sudhakaran were sentenced to a four-year imprisonment and a penalty of Rs.10 crore each.

Special judge **John Michael D'Cunha** convicted the 66-year-old AIADMK chief in a case of owning assets to the tune Rs.66.65 crore disproportionate to her known sources of income during 1991-96 when she was chief minister for the first time. She was convicted under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Panneerselvam, the 63-year-old finance minister of Tamil Nadu, who was elected the leader of the AIADMK's legislature party on Sunday, was sworn in as CM by governor **Konijeti Rosaiah**.

There are no changes in the portfolios held by other ministers in the state. Panneerselvam will hold additional charge of the finance and public works ministries.

This is Panneerselvam's second stint as chief minister under similar circumstances: he was made chief minister in September 2011 when Jayalalithaa was barred by the Supreme Court from continuing as chief minister in a land deal case.

A loyalist, he resigned six months later, when she was acquitted by the apex court.

In various parts of Tamil Nadu, AIADMK party workers are on hunger strikes in protest AGAINST the conviction of their party leader. Party workers in Madurai have called for general strike on Tuesday.

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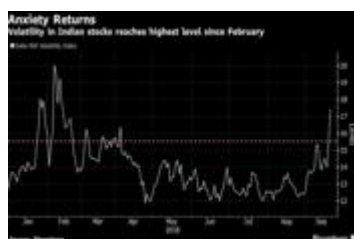
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