

Jayalalithaa Convicted In Graft Case

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by BW Online Bureau

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Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa was convicted in an 18-year-old disproportionate assets case by a special court on Saturday (27 September), a verdict that raises questions over her continuance on the post.

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 crores disproportionate to her known sources of income during 1991-96 when she was chief minister for the first time.

The quantum of punishment will be delivered at 3 PM, Special Public Prosecutor Bhawani Singh said.

Jayalalithaa's close aide Sasikala Natarajan, her niece Ilavarasi and her nephew and the chief minister's disowned foster son Sudhakaran were also convicted.

The verdict was delivered at a makeshift court in the Parappana Agrahara prison complex in the presence of Jayalalithaa and the other accused.

If the judge sentences her to imprisonment for a period not less than two years, the AIADMK leader will stand disqualified immediately from the Assembly and may have to step down as chief minister.

Jayalalithaa had to quit as Chief Minister immediately after her swearing in 2001 following the Supreme Court declaring null and void the action of the then Governor Fatima Beevi appointing her as the Chief Minister as she had been sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment in a corruption case.

O Paneerselvan, a junior Minister handpicked by her, was appointed as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. By 2002, she was cleared of all charges and sworn-in again as the Chief Minister.

The area around the court was turned into a fortress as the platoons of Karnataka State Reserve Police, the city Armed Reserve and the Rapid Action Force were deployed, besides hundreds of police personnel, including those in plain clothes.

A large number of AIADMK supporters had gathered since early morning.

The prolonged trial saw five judges - A S Pachapure, A T Munoli, B M Mallikarjunaiah, M S Balakrishna and John Michael D'Cunha.

The case was transferred to Bangalore's Special Court in 2003 by the Supreme Court on a petition filed by DMK leader K Anbazhagan who had expressed doubts over conduct of fair trial with Jayalalithaa as Chief Minister.

Security has been increased at the DMK headquarters and residences of its senior leaders. Police said that on a request from DMK, security had been increased at "Anna Arivalayam", the headquarters of DMK, two residences of former Tamil Nadu Chief

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maintained that the case was “politically motivated” and “fabricated” at the instance of her rival DMK.

Controversy also swirled around the case after Karnataka Advocate General B V Acharya quit as Special Public Prosecutor and Bhavani Singh came in his place. Questions were raised in the Supreme Court over appointment of Singh also.

The case was filed by Subramanian Swamy in 1996. She was arrested and jailed for some days after DMK came to power in the 1996 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

The Karnataka government has so far spent Rs 2.86 crore on playing host to the case, according to documents obtained by an RTI activist.

(PTI)

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