



Edappadi accuses DMK of enacting 'drama' in Rajiv case convicts' release

Chennai, Feb 5: Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Thursday accused the DMK of enacting a "political drama" on the issue of release of seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case with an eye on coming assembly elections.

He also questioned why the DMK while in power in 2000 had recommended commuting the death sentence of Nalini Sriharan alone and rejected the mercy petitions of three others.

The main opposition party was "performing the drama" now to gain the sympathy of the people in elections, due in a few months, by creating a perception that it was taking all-out efforts to get the seven life convicts released, he told the state assembly.

However, the AIADMK wanted their release and steps had been taken for it. The government was truly committed to facilitate their release, he asserted.

"I expect that the Governor would soon take a good decision in the matter (on the Tamil Nadu Cabinet's 2018 recommendation to release all the seven convicts)," he said during the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor's Address to the assembly.

Intervening during ruling AIADMK MLA V Panneerselvam's speech, that had references to the DMK, Palaniswami

traced the chronology of events in the case related to the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi at nearby Sriperumbudur in May, 1991.

He said that on April 19, 2000 a Cabinet meeting of the then DMK government recommended to then Governor Fathima Beevi to commute the death sentence of Nalini Sriharan alone to life imprisonment out of the total four people whose capital punishment was upheld by the Supreme Court.

The DMK government had recommended rejection of the mercy petition of three others -- Sriharan alias Murugan, Santhan and A G Perarivalan, he said, adding the Governor approved it.

Though the DMK issued statements for their release now, there was no answer from it till date on why its government did not recommend commutation of the death sentences of Sriharan, Santhan and Perarivalan, Palaniswami said.

"When this is the truth," the leader of the opposition in the assembly (DMK chief M K Stalin) staged a walkout from the House on Tuesday opposing the Governor's address and urging the release of seven convicts, he said.

Hiding the truth in the matter, Stalin has given interview to the press, he said, adding "the DMK is enacting a political drama

today on the issue" and the people were watching the events.

Detailing the steps taken by the AIADMK government, the chief minister said not stopping with the Cabinet recommendation, he himself has taken it up with Governor Banwarilal Purohit to expeditiously take a decision on their release.

On January 29 too he called on Purohit and reiterated the request, Palaniswami said.

Recalling past events, he said that after rejection of their petitions by the governor based on the DMK government's recommendation, Murugan, Santhan and Perarivalan had submitted mercy pleas to the then President in the same year. The pleas were rejected in 2011.

Though then Chief Minister J Jayalithaa got a resolution passed in the assembly seeking reconsideration of their petitions, the then Congress-led government did not take any action.

Also, the DMK, which was part of the Central government then, did not exert pressure on the union government on the matter.

Eventually, the Supreme Court commuted the trio's death sentences to life imprisonment and following that "Ammu" (Jayalithaa) decided in February 2014 to release all the seven convicts and sought the Centre's view as per law.

The then UPA government, led by the Congress went to the Supreme Court opposing Tamil Nadu government's move.

"The Congress which was in power then at the Centre and the DMK which was offering issue based outside support to the government could have helped for their release during that point in time at the least," he said.

Referring to the subsequent progress of the matter in the apex court and a Cabinet decision of his government on September 9, 2018 recommending to the Governor to release all the seven convicts, he asserted the past events demonstrated that the AIADMK government alone took "swift measures" for their release.

Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on the night of May 21, 1991 by a woman suicide bomber at an election rally. Besides the woman, thirteen others were also killed in the incident.

AIADMK goes to police against non-members using its flag; Sasikala's return to TN on Feb 8

Chennai, Feb 5: Signalling a tough stand against expelled leader V K Sasikala, the ruling AIADMK in Tamil Nadu on Thursday said it has petitioned the state police chief to restrain non-members of the party from using its flag, days after she travelled in a car fitted with it in Bengaluru.

The petition has been submitted ahead of the return of Sasikala, confidante of late Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa, after a gap of four years on completion of her jail term in Bengaluru in a corruption case.

Incidentally, Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam general secretary T T V Dhinakaran said Sasikala,

confidante of late Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa and his aunt, would return to the state next Monday, instead of earlier schedule of Sunday.

Speaking to reporters here, AIADMK deputy coordinator K P Munusamy said the "main reason" for the petition was due to the use of the party's flag by Sasikala in Bengaluru on Sunday after her discharge from a hospital where she was treated for COVID-19.

The plea was submitted to restrain non-members from using the AIADMK flag, the senior leader said adding Sasikala was not a member of his party and she had no moral right to use the flag.

It is seen as a move to ensure that the AIADMK

flag was not used by Sasikala or her associates in the AMMK when she returned to Tamil Nadu.

The AIADMK flag was mounted on the bonnet of a car she travelled following her recent discharge from the hospital in the Karnataka capital after recovery from COVID-19.

Sasikala was set free on January 27 following completion of a four year prison sentence in a corruption case.

The ruling party had then itself questioned the propriety of Sasikala's action when she had been ousted from the party.

Dhinakaran had defended the use of the AIADMK flag, saying Sasikala continued to be the general secretary of the party and litigation

relating to her "so-called expulsion" and connected matters were pending before the court.

Sasikala was expelled from the party in September, 2017 along with Dhinakaran and others by the general council of the combined AIADMK under the leadership of Chief Minister K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam after the two merged their respective factions.

NAME CHANGE

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