

SINGLE STROKE: ON THE SUPREME COURT RULING IN FAVOUR OF EDAPPADI PALANISWAMI IN THE AIADMK CASE

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The internal crisis in the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) seems to have blown over after the [Supreme Court of India ruled in favour of its interim general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami](#), leaving his rival O. Panneerselvam and his paltry following isolated. A two-judge Bench found no illegality in the convening of [a special General Council meeting on July 11, 2022](#), at which resolutions were adopted abolishing the 'dual leadership' system under a coordinator and a joint Coordinator, reinstating the post of general secretary and removing Mr. Panneerselvam from the party. The Court did not go into the validity of any of these resolutions, but ruled firmly that [a single judge of the Madras High Court](#) had no reason to force the estranged leaders to work together, ignoring the realities of the situation and based on technical grounds; and that [a Division Bench of the High Court had correctly interfered](#) with it. The verdict effectively ends the Panneerselvam camp's attempt to exercise equal control over the party's affairs through a judicial diktat to retain the dual leadership. There is, of course, the possibility of the legality of these decisions being examined in civil suits, but it is unlikely to lead judicial conclusion for a long time. Until then, the AIADMK will be firmly in the control of Mr. Palaniswami, who has outmanoeuvred the rival camp with the help of the overwhelming majority he enjoys at various levels in the organisation.

Mr. Panneerselvam had only recently spoken about "reclaiming the party from a dictator", but it is now increasingly clear that he will face political oblivion by persisting with his ambition to wrest the party mantle without shoring up his political base. The tactic of keeping himself in the good books of the Centre and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), even while expecting legal processes to bolster his case, is not really working well for him. It was only recently that he had to eat humble pie when he withdrew his faction's candidate for the Erode East Assembly by-election, claiming that the camp wanted the AIADMK's 'Two Leaves' symbol to succeed. A count ordered by the Supreme Court among the party's General Council members had resulted in a majority of members backing Mr. Palaniswami's nominee. Mr. Palaniswami is no less keen on keeping the BJP on his side, but his firm grip on the party apparatus seems to be standing him in good stead in the political arena, even if the electoral scene in the face of a strong DMK-led alliance remains a formidable challenge.

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