

## Karunanidhi to go on fast : Supreme Court stays Tamil Nadu General Strike

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Karunanidhi to go on fast

Stung by the Supreme Court order staying bandh on Monday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi and other alliance leaders of the ruling DMK front will observe fast to press for speedy implementation of Sethusamudram canal project.

"The hunger strike is for removal of Nandis (obstacles) for the speedy implementation of the project," he told reporters shortly after the SC stayed the bandh.

Instead of the bandh we will be observing fast, he said.

He declined to comment on the Court order.

"I don't want to comment on the Supreme Court order, our volunteers will observe a fast in all district and taluk headquarters," Karunanidhi said adding he will be leading the fast at Chennai in front of the State guest house.

Soon after the news of the stay trickled in, Karunanidhi said he contacted all the leaders of DPA and a decision to observe a fast taken after consultation with them.

Alliance leaders will also observe fast in district and taluk headquarters through out the State.

### Supreme Court stays Tamil Nadu General Strike

The ruling DMK front in Tamil Nadu on Sunday suffered a major setback with the Supreme Court restraining them from going ahead with the State-wide bandh on Monday on the Sethusamudram project issue.

Holding a rare sitting on a Sunday, a bench of Acting Chief Justice B N Aggrawal and P P Naolekar ordered that the DMK and its allies shall not go ahead with the bandh either on October 1 or any other date, as the bandh per se was illegal and unconstitutional in view of the apex court's earlier ruling on the validity of bandhs.

The apex court passed the direction on an "urgent application" filed by the opposition AIADMK along with its special leave petition seeking an injunction against the bandh.

The three-hours arguments that preceded the direction was laced with scathing and stinging remarks from the bench which minced no words in expressing its strong displeasure on the very concept of bandh and the perceived defiance of law by the citizens in the country, not to mention the political parties.

"That's the problem in this country. We have to deal everything with an iron hand in this country. Otherwise things will not work. Every organ, let it be the legislature, executive or judiciary has to deal with an iron hand," the apex court observed.

Recalling that the apex court had in 1998 clearly upheld the ruling of a full bench of the Kerala High Court that calling or enforcing a bandh was illegal and unconstitutional, the bench regretted that orders of the courts were being violated with impunity in the country.

"We have come to this stage in the country that everything has to be monitored, hammered or directed by courts. Even orders of the Supreme Court are not observed, what to talk of the High Courts. Ninety-nine per cent of the High Court orders are not complied," the apex court said.

The apex court rejected arguments of senior counsel Altaf Ahmed and A K Ganguly appearing for Tamil Nadu and the DMK that the October one protest programme was not a bandh call but rather a "hartal".

"If it is a bandh then it is a breakdown of the Constitutional machinery. Your own resolution says that the programme on October 1, is intended to ensure complete cessation of all activities, then how can you say it is not a bandh?," the bench grilled the Tamil Nadu counsel.

The bench brushed aside the claims of the State and the DMK that what was essentially intended was a public meeting.

"Where is the public meeting you show us. Your resolution says it is cessation of all activities and work. You want to show your popularity. Why do you want to close all down educational institutions and commercial activities. Where will you then find the people for your meetings," the apex court asked in a sarcastic tone.

