

Table: Chronological record of specific political activities by Indira Gandhi, MGR and Karunanidhi (1977-1979)*

Year	Specific Event(s)
1977	
Aug 12-20	Anti-Tamil riots, all over Sri Lanka, within a month of UNP's electoral victory in the July 1977 General election.
Aug 24	DMK organized protest by shutting down (<i>bandh</i>) strike in Chennai, and a protest march to support Sri Lankan Tamils held.
Aug 25	MGR had requested Prime Minister Morarji Desai (by a telegram) to send a Central government minister to Sri Lanka, for purposes of observing the damaged locations on a fact finding mission and provide all assistance to the Tamils who had suffered during the riots.
Sept 6	MGR met Prime Minister Morarji Desai in New Delhi to discuss issues related to protection of Sri Lankan Tamils. To this request, Morarji had given an assurance to him.
Sept 29	J.C. Shah Commission hearings began in New Delhi. Its remit was to inquire into subversion of lawful processes and well established conventions, administrative procedures and practices, abuse of authority, misuse of power, excesses and/or malpractices committed during the Emergency period (mid 1975- early 1977).
Oct 3	Indira Gandhi was arrested in New Delhi.
Oct 4	Produced before a magistrate, Indira was released 'unconditionally' due to lack of charges.
Oct 29	Indira's visit to Madurai and Tiruchi. Black flag demonstrations set up DMK. Aggression between Indira Congress party folks and DMK party activists led to police using tear gas and baton charge to disperse the crowd. Indira was protected by Congress party folks by covering

her body with a 'big cloth'.

- Oct 30 Detention of DMK leaders, including Karunanidhi, in Madras. They were held in remand initially for 14 days, and a 'Plotting to murder Indira' criminal case was foisted on 29 individuals. Charges included arson, damage to railway properties, rioting etc.
- Nov 3 Indira's travel to Karnataka state also had back flag protests against her. She was hurt by a stone thrown. Her right ear was damaged with oozing blood. She was given instant treatment, by stitching.
- Nov 4 Morarji Desai survived an Indian Air Force airplane crash-landing in a paddy field, while on official visit to Jorghat town, Assam state. Five pilots of Indian Air Force died! Kanti Desai, Morarji's son, suffered a broken leg.
- Nov 12 A strong cyclone in Bay of Bengal caused flooding, serious property damage and mortality in the coastal regions (Thanjavur district, Nagapattinam, Vedaranyam etc.) of Tamil Nadu. According to official records, 481 deaths were counted.
- Nov 14 Remand duration for Karunanidhi was further extended until Nov 26, as the prosecution attorney claimed that allowing him and his colleagues in bail may result in witness tampering. Again, the remand period was extended for the 2nd time until Dec 8, for the same reason.
- Dec 9 Karunanidhi was released, as his remand duration period lapsed on Dec 8th.

1978

- Jan 1 Congress party split, as instigated by Indira Gandhi. 70 MPs sided with Indira, with the formation of Congress (I), 'I' for Indira. 76 MPs grouped themselves as Congress (S), under the leadership of Swaran Singh. It was subsequently led by Devaraj Urs. Party symbol 'cow and calf' icon retained by Congress (S). Congress (I) received the Open Palm symbol.

- Jan 4 First No Confidence motion moved by DMK on MGR government. Debated for 3 days, and defeated by a voice vote. Congress (I) and Communist Parties opposing, while Janata Party abstaining.
- Jan 11 Indira appeared before the Shah Commission, and persisted in non-cooperation.
- Feb 20 Shah Commission hearings were completed.
- Feb 12 MGR announced at a government-held meeting in Palayamkottai that he'd return to acting, to complete a few movies that had been suspended previously, and also 'new' movies.
- Apr 2 *Indian Express* reported that 'MGR had written to PM Morarji Desai asking him for permission to act in films for which he had entered into a contract before he became chief minister of Tamil Nadu in June 1977.'
- April Agitation of *Vivasayigal Sangam* (State Farmers' Association), led by C.I. Narayasamy Naidu. On 24th and 25th, MGR held talks with the representatives of the Sangam.
- July 23-27 Caste violence erupted in Villupuram, between high caste Hindus and Adi Dravida (Dalit) groups, on 23rd afternoon. 12 Dalits were killed and more than 100 houses of Dalits were set on fire. P. Krishnan of ADMK (Villupuram MLA) was implicated. MGR and Karunanidhi visited the affected location subsequently.
- Aug 6 Final report of Shah Commission published, indicting Indira and her son Sanjay for deeds done during the Emergency Period (mid 1975 to early 1977). Findings had no legal authority and came to be regarded as a Janata Party's vindictive exercise.
- Oct After obtaining consent of President Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Tamil Nadu government scheduled the 5th International Tamil

- Conference Seminar to convene in Jan 2 -8, 1980 at Madurai.
- Oct 13 Veerendra Patil (a former Chief Minister of Karnataka) visited Karunanidhi at Chennai and solicited DMK support for the forthcoming Chigmagalur (Karnataka state) by-election for Lok Sabha. About 85,000 registered Tamil voters were in this constituency.
- Oct 31 MGR's international tour, visiting Japan, Hongkong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Europe and USA, for 6 weeks. He was in Washington DC on Nov. 3rd.
- Nov 7 Chigmagalur constituency by-election. Indira Gandhi was pitted against Veerendra Patil by Janata party. Indira won convincingly by a large margin of ~ 67,000 votes. Prior to his international tour, MGR campaigned for Indira and offered financial assistance to the campaign as well; while Karunanidhi campaigned for Janata Party nominee Patil.
- Nov 12 Indira traveled to UK, as a guest of industrialist Swraj Paul.
- Nov 16 S.D. Somasundaram, a founding member of MGR's party, resigned his Thanjavur Lok Sabha seat. He had won this constituency in 1977 with 60.1% vote against DMK candidate L. Ganesan's 39.8% vote.
- Dec 19 After returning from UK, Indira was charged with a serious breach of privilege by a resolution and following a heated debate, was expelled from Lok Sabha, and taken to Tihar jail.
- Dec 26 Indira was released from the jail.
- 1979**
- Jan 5 S. Govindan Murugaiyan (b. 1931), sitting Community Party (India) MP for Nagapattinam, was murdered by a knife-wielding ADMK party sympathizer, named Bose. MGR attended his funeral and made a condolence speech.

- Feb 19 DMK moved 2nd No-Confidence motion against MGR regime. It was defeated by 128-64 votes, with Congress party absconding.
- May 12 In a fence-sitting move, ADMK party decided on its support for the Congress (Indira) candidate for the forthcoming Thanjavur by-election. This by-election was due to S.D. Somasundaram (ADMK party's founder member) vacating his Lok Sabha seat, for being incorporated into MGR's Cabinet.
- May 19 MGR met with Indira, in the presence of Tamil Nadu's Congress Party leader Karuppiyah Moopanar. Then, with K. Rajaram, he met Morarji Desai.
- May 20 Even though Indira didn't publicly commit herself to contest Thanjavur by-election, the Tamil Nadu state Congress leaders Moopanar and R.V. Swaminathan in a trance, pushed her to enter the race. Newspapers reported that Indira will be contesting in the Thanjavur by-election. It was also revealed that, Morarji had asked MGR to choose either Morarji or Indira, but the prime minister had no qualms of MGR supporting the Congress Party. But, MGR opted not to see Indira contesting the Thanjavur by election. His cited reason was Indira's safety concerns, based on Oct 1977 incidents in Madurai. He deflected the 'spin' of DMK that he was 'thigh-shaken by Morarji's demand of loyalty. Subsequently Congress Party chose Singaravelu as its candidate. But Indira was also not pleased by MGR's unassurance.
- May 22 DMK leader Anbazhagan had mentioned in a campaign meeting in Thanjavur, that Karunanidhi was planning for direct show down with Indira, if the latter contests Thanjavur by-election.
- June 17 By-elections held for Thanjavur and Nagappatinam constituencies. MGR campaigned (uninvited) for Congress Party candidate and made sure S. Singaravelu won against DMK's front rank leader Anbil Dharmalingam.
Anna DMK candidate M. Mahalingam (48.3% of vote) lost marginally

- to Communist Party (India) candidate K. Murugaiyan (51.1% of vote) in the Nagappatinam constituency. Winner's vote margin was 15,941.
- July 11 A No-confidence motion against prime minister Morarji Desai moved in the Lok Sabha by Y.B. Chavan of Congress (Urs) faction. With the help of Indira's Congress Party, Morarji government was toppled.
- July 15 Morarji Desai resigned as the Prime minister.
- July 28 Charan Singh became the Prime minister. MGR offered his party's support to Charan Singh Cabinet. As such, two of his choices, Mrs Sathiwani Muthu and Aravinda Balapazhanoor became central government ministers on Aug 19.
- Aug 20 As Indira opted to play her 'dismantling card', Charan Singh failed to show parliamentary majority. Thus, his fate was sealed as a stop-gap choice for prime ministership.
- Aug 22 Though the five year term was to expire in March 1981, the Lok Sabha was dissolved by President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy.
- Sept 13 DMK and ADMK merger efforts initiated by Biju Patnaik (then, Minister of Steel, Mines and Coal) in Charan Singh Cabinet. First, MGR did agree.
- Sept 14 MGR repudiated the DMK – ADMK merger efforts.
- Sept 15 Karunanidhi met Indira at New Delhi.
- Sept 16 For courtesy, Karunanidhi also met with Jagjivan Ram (then, the leader of Janata Party) and Biju Patnaik.
- Sept 28 MGR met Charan Singh at New Delhi.
- Sept 30 Indira visited Chennai and addressed at a joint meeting organized by DMK. Her speech (probably in English) was translated into Tamil by a

young 34 year old P. Chidambaram. Karunanidhi also addressed the meeting in Tamil, with a rhyming couplet greeting '*Nehruvin Magale Varuha! Nilaiyana Aatchi Tharuha*' (Welcome the daughter of Nehru – Give Us a Stable Rule), and ended with three sentences in English. The final sentence was “We believe that only Thirumathi Indira Gandhi can give us a stable Government.”

- Oct 8 Jayaprakash Narayan (the nominal Founder of Janata Party in Jan 1977, from the merger of anti-Indira political groups) died in sleep, at Patna.
- Oct 25 Jayaprakash Narayan’s urn containing ashes was brought to Chennai and placed at Rajaji Hall, for public viewing and respect.
- Nov 27 Karunanidhi addressed its first list of party nominees for the forthcoming Jan 1980 General elections. DMK to contest in alliance with Congress (Indira) Party. Anna DMK also made a seat sharing deal with Janata Party for Tamil Nadu/Pondichery electorates: Anna DMK 24 seats, Janata Party 10 seats, Communist Party of India 3 seats, Communist Party (Marxist) 3 seats.
- Dec 12 Indira spoke at a DMK-Congress alliance propaganda meeting in Chennai, to canvas votes for three candidates contesting Chennai constituencies; Chennai South – R. Venkataraman (Congress), Chennai Central – Dr. Kalanithi (DMK) and Chennai North – G. Lakshmanan (DMK).
- Dec 23 MGR’s two nominees at Charan Singh’s caretaker Cabinet resigned at the request of Charan Singh, who cited a conflict of interest in ADMK policy of holding Cabinet position of his party, and simultaneously having an electoral alliance with Janata Party for the 1980 General election.

*This chronology was compiled by Sachi Sri Kantha, for Part 78 of ‘MGR Remembered’ series, Nov 2024. *Primary Sources*: Karunanidhi’s autobiography

'Nenjukku Neethi', vol. 3; MGR biography by Kannan (2017), Indira Gandhi biographies by Inder Malhotra (1989) and Katherine Frank (2002)