

Pasand

Singh Deo lashes out at Masani

"The Times of India" News Service
BHUBANESWAR, April 18: Mr. R. N. Singh Deo, leader of the Orissa Swatantra Party has reacted sharply to the criticism by the central leadership of the state unit's pact with the Utkal Congress and its role in toppling the Nandini Satpathy government last month.

Mr. Singh Deo, in a strongly-worded statement, yesterday indicated that if the central leadership were to press its point of view, the Orissa unit would cut itself adrift from the all-India party.

He referred to the statement of Mr. M. R. Masani at the recent Swatantra Party convention at Madras that the Orissa unit should not have joined hands with those found by an inquiry commission to be unworthy of public confidence.

Seeking to brush up Mr. Masani's memory, Mr. Singh Deo stated that the vigilance police had filed charge-sheets against Mr. Biju Patnaik and Mr. Biren Mitra, former chief minister, on the basis of the Khanna commission's findings but a special judge had discharged them.

He also reminded Mr. Masani that Mr. Patnaik had subsequently been accepted by the Rajnagar electorate which returned him to the state assembly with a record majority of votes.

Mr. Singh Deo lashed out at Mr. Masani by saying that the latter had "by his puritanical attitude not advanced the prospects of the Swatantra Party" when he was its president. On the contrary, it had led to "liquidation or near liquidation of the party" in Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and elsewhere.

He stated that the central leadership had shown "misplaced sympathy" for the Satpathy government. It was difficult to understand why the central leadership by "impolite letters and untimely statements, should give indirect support to the dying ruling Congress Party in Orissa and make the task of state unit of the party difficult."

Mr. Singh Deo declared that the Orissa unit would continue to be a constituent of the Orissa Pragati party along with the Utkal Congress.

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