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PM 'twisting' issues, says Patnaik

Express News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Dec. 25.

PRAGATI Party chief Biju Patnaik today reiterated his demand for more economic powers to the States within the "national limitations and national discipline" to enable them to shape their destiny.

Accusing the Prime Minister of "twisting" his demand to suit her political ends, Mr. Patnaik told newsmen that his demand was neither a separatist move nor it would lead to the disintegration of the country.

Mrs. Gandhi's "twist" to his demand that he was advocating liaison by the States directly with foreign powers was "merely an election stunt to confuse the issue" since she could not offer any "positive alternative which could unfreeze the present state of national inertia," Mr. Patnaik said.

To say that his demand for decentralisation of economic authority would disrupt the unity and integrity of the country, smacked of the "naked desire to cling to power by a few in Delhi at great cost to national growth and removal of regional imbalances."

Mr. Patnaik convened the Press conference after he received a telegram from Sarvodaya leader Jayaprakash Narayan from Mysore in Tamil Nadu requesting him to "publicly clarify" if he had advocated autonomy for the States to negotiate directly with foreign powers "as alleged by the Prime Minister."

There was no question of the States having separate political relations with any foreign country as "mischievously alleged" by Mrs. Gandhi. Such relationships must necessarily be within the orbit of the national Government.

"What I want is decentralisation of economic power within national limitations and national discipline as such a step is more than likely to infuse new energy and vitality in the States in a spirit of competition which would result in total national gain as against total national apathy as is visible today," Mr. Patnaik said.

Mr. Patnaik said he was merely asking for decentralisation of the economic authority of the Centre and added: "If I come to power, I am confident that I would be able to create a national consensus in favour of decentralisation of economic authority for better economic growth of the nation."

Referring to Mrs. Gandhi's remarks that the demand for greater autonomy to negotiate directly with foreign countries for collaboration was "unpatriotic" and "anti-national," Mr. Patnaik said: "While I am not prepared to take lessons from Mrs. Gandhi on patriotism,

nationalism and democracy, I challenge her to point out which part of my thinking comes under the definitions of unpatriotic, anti-national and undemocratic."

Despite the stability of her Government, Mrs. Gandhi had failed to implement her pledge of garibi hatao, bekari hatao and stabilise prices. "Obviously, mere repetition of the need for a strong and stable Government is not the answer to India's problems of today or tomorrow. New dimensional thinking is urgently needed. It is said that a Prime Minister of India is unable to receive new ideas," Mr. Patnaik said.

The people of India lived in the States and not in the archives of New Delhi as perhaps was presumed by the power-conscious Central leaders. The Central Economic Authority must be decentralised by making the States more responsive and responsible to meet the problems of their own areas.

More autonomy defended

CHANDIGARH, Dec. 25.

Two Punjab Akali leaders today defended their party's demand for more autonomy of the States, saying that it was essentially motivated by a desire to strengthen the States and consequently the Indian Union.

Mr. Ajaib Singh Sandhu, Deputy Leader of the Akali Party in the Punjab Assembly, and Mr. Gurbir Singh, son of the late Chief Minister, Mr. Gurnam Singh, a member of the Akali Working Committee, maintained that the Centre overwhelmed by problems created by its "false promises and administrative mismanagement has no time or will-power to solve the States problems while the Congress Chief Ministers lack courage to represent the States cases effectively."

Therefore vital economic projects such as the Thein dam and the Narmada project were languishing through Centre's indecision, thus causing a loss of crores of rupees annually.

*For Ram
Mr. P. S. D
Srinivas
for him*

TIMES OF INDIA.

26 DEC 1973

Patnaik's charge against PM

BHUBANESWAR, December 25: The Orissa Pragati Party leader, Mr. Biju Patnaik, today accused the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, of deliberately twisting his statements on the question of greater economic power for the states.

He told a news conference here that he had never demanded "evasion of national authority but wanted only decentralisation of economic authority."

Referring to Mrs. Gandhi's accusation that people demanding better links with foreign countries for "economic development" were "anti-national and unpatriotic," Mr. Patnaik clarified that there was no question of states having separate "political relationship" with foreign powers as "mischievously" stated by the Prime Minister.

"Such relationship must necessarily be within the orbit of national government. Within the two broad principles of national discipline and national limitations, I want greater economic power for the states," he added.

Earlier the Sarvodaya leader, Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan, had sent a telegram to Mr. Patnaik asking him to clarify if he had advocated autonomy of states to negotiate directly with foreign powers as stated by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Patnaik said Mrs. Gandhi's plea that decentralisation of economic authority would make rich states richer was discounted for the simple reason that the so-called advanced states of the country, whose growth was entirely due to concentration of infrastructure during the British rule without sizable natural endowments within their boundary, would not be able to compete with states like Orissa if economic authority was decentralised.—U.N.I.

23 DEC 1973

States can't ask for joint foreign ventures: PM

SUNABEDA (Koraput), Dec. 22 (PTI)—Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today ruled out the question of allowing States to directly negotiate with foreign countries for collaboration in setting up development projects in their respective areas.

Mrs Gandhi, who was inaugurating the 6th annual conference of the All Orissa Tribal and Rural Welfare Teachers' Association at a largely-attended public meeting here, described such demands as "unpatriotic."

Apparently referring to the Pragati Party leader, Mr Biju Patnaik, Mrs Gandhi said some people in Orissa said that this State should be allowed to negotiate with foreign countries directly for collaboration in setting up certain projects. "If all other States make similar demands, what will happen to our independence and national integrity?" she asked.

The Prime Minister said the people should understand the implications of such demands and that those who were raising such slogans were not acting in the national interest.

Mrs Gandhi also denounced the demand for giving more "autonomy" to the States and said if the States were allowed to go their own way, the advanced States would progress faster while the backward ones like Orissa would slide back further. She appealed to the working class to refrain from strikes when the country was faced with a difficult economic situation.

"I am not against strikes. But the workers should realise that their resorting to strikes at this moment will hit the poor people hard. The rich people are least affected by their strikes. The workers should refrain from all activities which affect production," she added.

Addressing another public meeting at Parlakimedi she promised greater attention of the Centre for the economic development of Orissa, especially the uplift of its tribal population.

The meeting was organised by the Tribal Development Agency. She said though the country had progressed in different fields, its impact had not been felt by the Adivasis. That was why the Government had taken up some long-term programme for the economic development of the tribal people, she added.

A large number of people, mostly Adivasis from the surrounding areas on the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border attended the meeting.

Mrs Gandhi, who earlier arrived from Charbatia airfield by helicopter, was garlanded by an Adivasi girl with the traditional "mali" at the meeting ground.

Referring to the national problem of poverty, Mrs Gandhi called upon workers, agriculturists and intellectuals to make united efforts to remove it.

Mrs Gandhi said the removal of distress and poverty was the aim of the Government, but this could not be done overnight. First, the

causes of poverty had to be realised by everyone.

Earlier, welcoming Mrs Gandhi Governor B. D. Jatti requested the Prime Minister to sympathetically consider a large programme of tribal development agencies in the fifth Plan. Orissa, he said, had been pressing for 15 such agencies to cover backward tribal areas as this was the best method to deal with the tribal problems.

Mrs Gandhi handed over a "patta" (title deed) of reclaimed land to an Adivasi a postal saving pass book to another and loan bonds for agriculture and digging wells to other Adivasis as a token of the Tribal Development Agency programme.

Under the programme 360 hectares of land had so far been reclaimed and 125 hectares distributed to 147 Adivasi families.