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GUJARAT SWATANTRA NOMINEE LOSES IN RAJYA SABHA POLL

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A SERIOUS crisis has developed in the Gujarat Swatantra Party following the defeat of its candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections as the result of an open revolt against the leadership by a section of the party legislators.

Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Opposition leader in the State Assembly, Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel and Mr. Jaideepsinhji, resigned their party posts today within hours of the announcement of the results for the three Rajya Sabha seats from Gujarat.

One of the seats was bagged by a Congress-backed rebel Swatantra member, Mr. Udesinh Mahida. A large section of the Legislature Swatantra Party defied the whip and supported Mr. Mahida against the officially-sponsored candidate, Mr. Babubhai Vaidya.

For the two other seats, Mr. Jai-sukhlal Hathi, Union Minister for Labour and Rehabilitation, and Mr. Tribhuvandas Patel (both Congress) were returned. Both are sitting Rajya Sabha members.

VOTING DETAILS

Mr. Patel and Mr. Hathi were declared elected by the first preference votes while Mr. Mahida was declared winner after the second preference votes were taken into account.

The votes polled were: Mr. Hathi—46; Mr. Patel—41, Mr. Mahida—48 and Mr. Vaidya—27. Of the 164 votes polled, two were declared invalid. One Swatantra member, Mr. Ambashankar Trivedi, did not vote.

While 35 Swatantra members participated in the election, Mr. Vaidya, the official party candidate, could muster only 27 votes, Mr. Mahida, on the other hand, got several second

preference votes from Congress members.

A large number of Swatantra M.L.A.s had been from the beginning opposed to the selection of Mr. Vaidya as the party's candidate on the ground he was not a member of the party. He, however, enjoyed the blessings of the Central Parliamentary Board which had preferred him to Mr. Mahida.

Mr. Mahida refused to withdraw from the contest despite a directive from the leaders who were unable to win over the dissidents despite vigorous efforts.

Soon after the results were announced, Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel announced his resignation from the party post. He said the party members had flouted the whip and revolted openly despite his repeated appeals. "I do not want to occupy any official position in the party now," he said.

Mr. H. M. Patel, chairman of the Gujarat Swatantra Party, described the election of the unofficial Swatantra candidate as "unfortunate." He said the party would consider what disciplinary action should be taken against the members who supported Mr. Mahida.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Jaideepsinhji, also submitted his resignation from the party post as the defeat of the official candidate indicated "lack of confidence in him by the members."

The Legislature Swatantra Party, which met in the evening, accepted the resignations and directed its whip,

Mr. Udesinh Vadodiy, to act as Leader of the Opposition till fresh elections were held. The party will meet on April 21 to elect a new leader and deputy leader.

SWATANTRA PARTY

Resolution moved by Mr. K.P. Singh Deo, M.P. and unanimously adopted by the General Council

Relief for Orissa Cyclone Victims

This meeting of the General Council of the Swatantra Party extends its sympathies to the unfortunate victims of the recent cyclone that ravaged large areas of Orissa. The human suffering caused by this visitation of nature's fury has only added to the cup of sorrow of the people of Orissa already undergoing the effects of a three-year old drought.

This meeting of the General Council appeals

- a. to the Central Government to render maximum assistance financially and in other material ways to the State Government to enable the latter to provide in adequate measure material assistance like loans to agriculturists, house-building equipment and accelerate Relief Works such as the reconstruction of wells, tanks and medium scale irrigation Works; and
- b. to the people of India in general and to members of the Swatantra Party in particular to donate liberally to the Orissa Chief Minister's Relief Fund.