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HOME DEPARTMENT
NOTIFICATION
The 3rd June 1984

No. 3117-Poll.—In the death of Shri Biswanath Das, the State has lost one of her
most distinguished sons. An embodiment of simplicity and grace, a veteran freedom
fighter, an astute statesman, a democrat and an altruist, his name was to conjure
with the socio-political life of the State for more than half a century.

He was born on March 8, 1889 to late Madhusudan Das of Ganjam district. He graduated
from the Ravenshaw College and obtained a Degree of Bachelor of law from the Calcutta
University. While pursuing his legal avocation in Madras he was irresistibly drawn to the
freedom struggle, in response to the call for non-co-operation movement in 1921 and
joined the Indian National Congress. In the same year, he was elected President of
Chhatrapur Taluk Board in Ganjam district. Earlier to 1920 he had pioneered the
agitaton for abolition of intermediary systems on land by organising Kisan movement
in Madras Presidency.

Elected to the Madras Council for three terms from 1920 to 1929, he resigned from
the body to activise the freedom movement and courted imprisonment several times.
He had braved detention during the Quit India Movement in 1942.

His tireless efforts for amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts through the aegis of
Utkal Conference is indeed a valued memory. After the separation of Orissa province in
1936, he was elected to its Assembly to become its first Prime Minister in 1937. He
however resigned the office in 1939 in obedience to the directives of the Indian National
Congress on the declaration of the Second World War. His tenure as Prime Minister of
the State was distinguished by several legislative reforms including amendment of the
Bihar and Orissa Tenancy Act, bestowing relief upon distressed tenants.

Sri Biswanath Das, who lived all along a life of austerity, had numerous occasions
to hold high political offices. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly from 1947
to 1952. Besides being a Member of the State Congress Executive Committee from 1947
to 1952, he was the President of Pradesh Congress Committee for a number of years.
Elected to the State Assembly for second time in 1962, he resigned to accept the
Governorship of Uttar Pradesh, an assignment which he held for the full term. He
returned to State politics once again to head the coalition ministry of Utkal Congress,
Swatantra and Jharkhand during 1971-72.

He keenly pursued the high ideals of social service by his involved association
with the Servants of People Society of which he became the President on the demise of
the former Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Sastri. Besides he was one of the founder-
trustees of Chaturdham Veda Bhavan, Puri and instituted Biswanath Trust Fund to cater
to the felt needs of poor students.

In his death a veteran, multi-dimensional career has been extinguished. The people
and the Government of Orissa record their profound sense of grief and loss at the
passing away of this illustrious son of the State.

R. N. DAS
Secretary to Government

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