

My men were not involved in ruckus at party meet: Rane

Maharashtra Revenue Minister Narayan Rane Friday denied that he or his men were involved in the ruckus created before Congress president Sonia Gandhi was to address a meeting here Thursday.

Speaking to mediapersons at his office in Mantralaya, Rane expressed his loyalty to Gandhi and claimed that the incident was 'a well-planned conspiracy' aimed at defaming him before the party chief.

Recounting the incident, Rane said that when the slogan shouting started, several leaders, including Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Harshwardhan Patil and [Mumbai](#) MP Gurudas Kamat went down from the dias to pacify the agitated party workers, who were shouting for Deshmukh's removal.

Rane claimed that the leaders informed Gandhi that they were his men. He said that he then personally went to find out the truth and pacify the party workers.

He later informed Gandhi and state party president Prabha Rau that the men were not known to him. 'There were persons like Sunil Ahire, Pappu Yadav, Santosh Singh, Umesh Bhatia and others who are seen with Goregaon corporator Samir Desai. Why should I bring men from Kanikavali. Don't I have my supporters in Mumbai?' Rane said.

Incidentally, Desai is a nephew of senior city party leader Gurudas Kamat.

Rane pointed out that after some time when the meeting started and Deshmukh spoke there was silence and his speech was greeted by applause.

He said that in the meantime media channels had started flashing that his men had created a ruckus at Gandhi's meeting. Rane has sent a legal notice to one prominent newspaper Friday in this connection.

'My patience has run out. Let whoever wants to remain chief minister, do so, and let anyone who wants to become chief minister, become one, but I do not understand why I should be defamed,' said Rane. He is considered a strong contender for the chief minister's post.

Wondering if Deshmukh 'mised' Gandhi, Rane vowed to meet and apprise her of what happened. 'My job is to have faith in the high command,' he said.

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