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Masani sees stranglehold

MADRAS, April 15.

The sixth national convention of the Swatantra Party, which concluded here this evening, noted with "grave concern" the impact of the Indo-Soviet treaty on India's foreign and domestic policies and suggested speedy normalisation of India's relations with other countries and close co-operation with neighbouring nations.

In a lengthy resolution on international relations, the convention said the "ill-advised defence treaty of 1971 with the Soviet Union, had led India to occupy an unhappy isolated position among the countries of the world."

The convention, which adopted unanimously the draft resolution recommended by the general council of the party without any amendment, also stated that the treaty had "limited India's options in the promotion of the national interest and removed any scope for independent domestic and foreign policies."

It had given the Soviet bloc a "stranglehold" on India's foreign trade and economic life, the resolution said.

The resolution wanted India to bring about a detente between Pakistan and Bangladesh. It also emphasised the need for a phased programme of repatriation of the Pakistan prisoners of war and Bengalis from Pakistan.

Mr. M. R. Masani, former president of the party, who moved the resolution criticising the Indo-Soviet defence treaty, said the treaty had "virtually made the Indian Ocean a Soviet lake for Russian ships" though India had been professing that the ocean would be left alone by the big powers. He gave figures which he claimed show that the Soviet ships had used the ocean for more number of days than the ships of any other country.

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Masani