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Swatantra Not To Join Any Bloc

FROM OUR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

NEW DELHI Saturday—Mr M R Masani said here this evening that the Swatantra Party in Parliament would not join any bloc and would maintain its identity. Members of the party would work as a "determined but not a tactious Opposition" he added. That the Swatantra M.Ps would maintain their independent entity was also made clear in a statement

issued today by the Central Parliamentary Board of the party.

The statement said the party's "small group in both Houses of Parliament would now have a heavier responsibility" and a "more significant role to perform in upholding the values of democracy and individual liberty".

"It is therefore important that they should function on their own and articulate the distinctive Swatantra approach and policies" it added. While members of the party would staunchly resist any tendency that might develop "towards authoritarianism" they should not "hesitate to continue to give support to such measures of the Government as would build the nation into a prosperous and free society" the statement said.

RESULTS REVIEWED

The board today reviewed the results of the Lok Sabha poll and though it was "intrigued by the incredibly huge majorities" the ruling party candidates had got in many constituencies "all the same as good democrats" the board felt that the Swatantra Party "should accept the popular verdict and its implications".

The statement adopted by the board said the claim that the Prime Minister and her party had been given a mandate to amend the Constitution "is unfounded and belied by the figures of voting".

The ruling party has not succeeded "in getting more than 43.64% of the votes polled and has failed to reach anywhere near getting a majority of those who voted or even one-fourth of the entire electorate."

Pointing out that if the system of proportional representation had prevailed the Prime Minister would not have been able to form a Government without support from other parties the statement said "the newly elected Lok Sabha does not reflect fairly the will of the people which has been grossly distorted by an absurd over-representation of the ruling party and a cruel under-representation of all Opposition groups".

According to the party's Parliamentary Board, one of the main reasons for the defeat of the candidates of the Democratic Front was the absence of a common programme which it could project. It had always been the Swatantra Party's view that a democratic alternative could have been provided by the front only with a "full-fledged alliance and an agreed programme". The abandonment of the effort at a common programme had proved to be a "gift to the Prime Minister" the board felt.

ABSENCE OF PROGRAMME

Therefore, the Swatantra Party had also "unfortunately to share in the debacle resulting from the loss of credibility on the part of the front culminating in the absence of an agreed programme and the attribution to it of the slogan 'Indira hatao' which the party for one had never accepted" the statement added.

The National Executive and General Council of the party will meet some time in the middle of next month to make what Mr Masani described as an "agonizing reappraisal" of the election results.

Meanwhile the Parliamentary Board today elected Mr P K Deo as leader of its eight-member group in the Lok Sabha. Mr H M Patel will be the deputy leader and Mr Pitroo Modi secretary and whip.