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Statesman

21/3/71

Swatantra not to join any bloc

Express News Service

NEW DELHI, March 20.

The Swatantra Party will function in Parliament "on its own instead of forming any kind of bloc." This was disclosed by Mr Minoo Masani, President of the Party, today at a news conference.

Mr Masani, who was briefing newsmen on what the Central Parliamentary Board of the party had discussed when it met here today, said it did not mean, however, that the party's State units would not be allowed to make their own adjustments for election and other purposes. It also did not mean that "we are averse to merger of parties."

The Central Parliamentary Board, in a 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, including the Swatantra Party, in terms of the popular support mobilised by them."

The statement said the New Congress had not succeeded in getting more than 43.64 per cent of the votes polled. It had failed to reach anywhere near getting a majority of those who voted or even one-fourth of the entire electorate. "In most countries of the world where some system of proportional representation prevails, the Prime Minister would not have been able to form a Government without entering into a coalition with like-minded parties in order to secure a majority in the Lok Sabha."

Major snag

The Parliamentary Board said apart from a "revival of the cult of personality and the use of money power," one of the principal reasons for the defeat of the candidates of the Democratic Front (Four-Party Alliance) was the absence of a common programme."

The statement said unfortunately the party had to "share in the debacle resulting from the loss of credibility" on the part of the Front due to prolonged vacillation and the attribution to it of the slogan "Indira Hato", which the Swatantra for one had never accepted.

Mr Masani said the Alliance was a good idea but six months of vacillation over a common programme took away all the glitter from it. If the Swatantra Party had committed any mistake, it was "going back to the Alliance."

Mr Masani said in some constituencies the Swatantra candidates had won because of the Alliance and in some others they had lost. He was defeated because of the Alliance, for example.

Mr Masani said the present system of election was "archaic" because it was not based on proportional representation. He said: "So let's face it. It (Mrs Gandhi's Government) is a minority Government."

He said the National Council of the Swatantra Party would meet in the third week of April—either in Bombay or in Madras—for a fuller appraisal of the situation. Mr Masani described it as "an agonising reappraisal."

Masani to write autobiography

Express News Service

NEW DELHI, March 20.

Mr Minoo Masani, Swatantra Party President, is going to write his autobiography—if he can "get away from politics." He does not know if he really can get away, but he is going to try.

It will be a political autobiography—"political and intellectual"—something like Mr Nirad C. Chaudhuri's "Autobiography of an Unknown Indian." It will take him about two years to complete it, he says.