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Subject

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P-SP, Swatantra search for Lok Sabha party chiefs

The FPJ News Service

NEW DELHI, March 7: With the defeat at the polls of Shri N. G. Ranga and the withdrawal of Shri M. R. Masani from contest to the Lok Sabha (in Himachal Pradesh), the 22-member Swatantra Party is in search of an experienced and effective party leader in the Lok Sabha.

The chances of Maharaja Pratap Keshari Deo of Kalahandi becoming the leader of the Parliamentary party are bright, according to sources close to the party here. Shri Deo has been the leader of the Ganatantra Parishad and with the merger of Parishad with the Swatantra, he may continue to lead the merged unit.

The 12-member Praja-Socialist Party is also left without a Parliamentary leader, with the defeat of Shri Asoka Mehta in the elections. Among the elected members, Shri Surendranath Dwiverty is the senior-most member and he may take up the leadership. Shri Nath Pal will, however, be the party's spokesman on the floor of the House.

Meanwhile, the P.S.P. is thinking on the same lines as the Swatantra Party of forming a united non-Congress, no-Communist Opposition with the help of Jan Sangh and Independents. Negotiations in this direction are likely to be initiated by Shri C. Rajagopalachari and Shri Asoka Mehta on the eve of the meeting of Parliament in May.

Shri A. K. Gopalan is likely to be the leader of the 29-member Communist Party and Prof. Hiren Mukherji Deputy Leader.