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Swatantra may still join alliance

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Bombay, Jan. 7—Irrespective of the "deep disappointment" caused to the Swatantra Party over the formation of an Opposition alliance without an advance agreement on a minimum common programme, the party leadership is in no mood to let the Congress (N) reap the fruits of the dissensions among the non-Communist parties and come to power through a division of votes between the parties opposed to it.

The national executive of the Swatantra Party, which is meeting tomorrow in Madras, is expected to give a green signal for the party's active participation in the national front of "democratic" parties.

There is no doubt that the party leadership is much perturbed over the views of the leaders of the Samyukta Socialist Party concerning the possibilities of an electoral understanding between their party and the Marxist Communists but the Swatantra leadership is sure that the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh, the larger members of the alliance, would not only refuse to entertain the SSP proposal to befriend the CPM but also try to prevent that party from falling a prey to the Communist strategy.

There are clear indications that when the representatives of the Congress (O), the Jan Sangh and the Samyukta Socialist Party meet in New Delhi on Jan. 15 to discuss the division of the Lok Sabha seats, they will also have with them the leaders of the Swatantra Party.

Minimum programme

This, however, does not mean that the Swatantra Party is reconciled to the decision of the other parties to come together without agreeing to a minimum common programme. The party is of the opinion that the stand taken by its chairman, Mr M. K. Masani, in keeping out of the al-

liance was right and taken in conformity with the party's policy "which lays equal importance on credibility and stability."

Mr Masani did not act in a huff but acted after consultations with the leader of the party in the Rajya Sabha, Mr Dahyabhai Patel, and others who were available in New Delhi on that day.

The party circles are amazed over the Congress (O) president, Mr Nijalingappa's views that fixation of a minimum programme before winning the elections would be like putting the cart before the horse. It is explained that nowhere in the world, the political parties have waited for the electorate's verdict before spelling out their programme.

Candidates' list

The Central Parliamentary Board of the party will on Saturday screen the list of candidates suggested by its State units but it is obvious that the board will have little to do in Madras as the final list of the Swatantra candidates could only be drawn after the New Delhi meeting of the alliance members on Jan. 15 and 16. The board might have to meet immediately after the New Delhi meeting if it does not delegate its authority to two or three top leaders of the party.

The national executive of the party will also discuss the political situation in Orissa. The party leadership is in a close touch with the Chief Minister, Mr R. N. Singhdeo, who might not be able to attend the meeting tomorrow. The executive will, however, get a report on the situation from Mr Masani and Mr Sundermani Patel, members of the Rajya Sabha from Orissa.

The party leadership is confident that Mr Singhdeo will be able to face the situation squarely. In case the Assembly is dissolved, the party has no doubt of being returned with a renewed mandate from the electorate.