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Hindustan Times 7/1/71

Minimum programme 'overemphasised'

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Madras, Jan. 6—Swatantra circles here are optimistic of the party joining the democratic alliance of the Congress (O), Jan Sangh and the SSP to fight the ensuing elections and the national executive meeting on Friday is expected to give the green signal to it.

The sudden turn of events in last Sunday's New Delhi talks when party President M. R. Masani walked out in a huff protesting against the move to have only electoral adjustments instead of a full-fledged alliance with a common minimum programme has caught partymen here by surprise. They feel the issue of a minimum programme had been overemphasised and point out that the minimum programme of the democratic parties as repeatedly stressed by party founder leader C. Rajagopalachari was the ouster of the Indira Gandhi Government and saving of democracy.

All the party mandate that Mr Masani wanted, they assert, was contained in the recent remark of Rajaji that "I and Kamaraj are one." Mr Masani appears to be in a minority of one in insisting that no meaningful alliance could be forged without prior agreement on a minimum programme among the parties constituting the front.

Rajaji has not been very happy with the Swatantra walk-out at the Delhi meeting.

Mr N. G. Ranga has said a minimum programme would certainly emerge from the united approach of the four parties during the poll campaign. He would want the party to join the front first and think of working out a minimum programme later.

At the State level at any rate the party will find itself in a sorry plight without an electoral understanding with the Kamaraj-led Congress (O) which is the only other party, apart from the DMK, which can boast of a mass following. The State unit of the Swatantra Party is actually planning the release of a joint list of candidates that would include the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh nominees.