

Karnal

Swatantra thwarts alliance bid

Ahmedabad, Jan. 5—In spite of the optimism displayed by Mr Morarji Desai before newsmen today, his alliance scheme seems to have been thwarted by the boycott of the Swatantra Party chief, Mr Masani's walk-out from it on Sunday.

Before leaving, Mr Morarji Desai told newsmen in spite of this he felt hopeful about a settlement with the Swatantra Party.

Congress (O) circles, however, admitted that Mr Masani by his lightning walk-out had upset the mood of GPCC (O) leadership which had just started turning back from its earlier anti-alliance prejudice to toe the Morarji line.

It was pointed out by Mr Morarji Desai's backers here the State Parliamentary Board had already come to a consensus about gifting away six to seven seats including the Rajkot constituency of Mr Masani and the leadership had been able to bring even militant anti-Swatantra elements among District leaders in a mood for compromise.

Mr Desai's apple-cart seemed to have been upset as Congress (O) workers learned about the bombshell dropped by the Swatantra President. Mr Masani's action provided an opportunity to the "Hawks" among District leaders who had always been itching for a fight with the Swatantra and Jan Sangh.

The worst sufferer of this is Mr Masani himself. Important leaders of the DPCC (O) and the District Panchayat President had already given veiled threats of "rebellion" against Rajkot being gifted away. Most constituencies including Jamnagar, Junagadh, Panchmahals and Ahmedabad, settled in favour of the Swatantra Party are once again in the melting pot.

The party has been shocked by Mr Masani's behaviour and fear it has been irreparably damaged by this step.

Meanwhile, Congress (O) circles have come out with reassuring news that senior leaders including Mr Piloo Mody and others have been trying in Bombay to bring Mr Masani back and resume negotiations with the alliance constituents. Political circles here have noted that both Mr Desai and the State leadership of GPCC (O) have kept the Jan Sangh out of purview of the talks to avoid alienation of the Muslim electorate.

Differences between the Congress (O) and its proposed election allies on foreign policy issues would not come in the way of smooth functioning of a coalition Government they might form at the Centre, Mr Morarji Desai said.

Talking to newsmen at Ahmedabad airport before leaving for Bombay, Mr Desai declared his party would not accept a confederation of India and Pakistan, as desired by the Swatantra Party. The confederation proposal might not get support from either country because of "deep-rooted suspicion," he said.

Mr Desai did not believe the try because of "deep-rooted suspicion," he said.

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