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Hindu, 9/1/71

Swatantra to Join 3-Party Alliance

MADRAS, Jan. 8.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party to-day decided that the party should join the recently formed "Front" consisting of the Organisation Congress, the Jan Sangh and the Samyukta Socialist Party.

A resolution, unanimously adopted by the Executive said this decision was taken in the light of the "clear assurance" given by the Congress (O) President that no communist party would be allowed to associate itself with the Front.

The Executive, however, expressed its "deep disappointment" at the abandonment of the effort to establish a democratic alliance with a common programme.

Mr. M. R. Masani, President, briefing reporters, said his party would like to have a "limited common programme" even now, if the other parties would consider it. Such a programme was an important element to give credibility to an alternative stable government at the Centre.

He said the Executive's decision to join the Front was based on "practical considerations" and because of the larger issues at stake in the country now. His party was firmly opposed to the inclusion of C.P.I. or C.P.M. in the Front, he said.

"We will not touch them with a pair of tongs", he said. Even for electoral adjustments, his party would like to have dealings only with democratic parties. The inclusion of communists in the Front was opposed by many Congress (O) members themselves.

He said talks with the Front members on the allotment of seats would begin after January 15.

Mr. Masani said the meeting expressed its unhappiness at the

Election Commissioner's statement that he was not able to implement the election broadcasts scheme because there was no unanimity among the various parties. The meeting felt the scheme, evolved by the Election Commission, was "very fair" and no unanimity was required to put it into operation.

Mr. Masani pointed out while the Swatantra, the Congress (O), and the Jan Sangh had accepted the scheme, only the Ruling Congress opposed it and other parties had not yet expressed their views on it.

The Executive felt that the Election Commission should not abandon the scheme but carry it out in a way which the Commission thought would be fair. Mr. Masani said the party would write to the Commissioner soon on these lines.

He said the national convention of the party scheduled to be held on January 30 and 31 had been postponed till after the elections.

The Executive, which will continue its deliberations to-morrow, will discuss the party's election manifesto. The Central Parliamentary Board of the party will meet to-morrow afternoon.

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Resend