

Hegde bid to end Assam crisis fails

Express News Service

SHILLONG, June 1.

Mr. Ram Krishna Hegde, General Secretary of the Janata Party returned from Gauhati to New Delhi to report to the Party high command the failure of his mission to bring about a reconciliation between the warring factions in the Assam unit of the organisation.

Mr. Hegde, who met members of both factions of the Assam Janata Legislature Party, both individually and collectively, on Wednesday and Thursday, told newsmen before his departure for Delhi that he would submit his report to the Party Chief Mr. Chandra Shekhar on the existing political situation in the State.

He parried questions on the prospects of bringing about a rapprochement between the Chief Minister, Mr. Golap Chandra Borbora and the pro changers led by Tarini Mohan Barua but hoped that both the groups would accept the high commands verdict in the matter.

Mr. Hegde, during his meeting with individual legislators of both the factions is understood to have carried an impression that a sizeable section of the Janata Legislators were in favour of the demand that the Chief Minister be asked to seek a fresh vote of confidence.

He, however, impressed upon them all the need for sinking differences and working as a cohesive party.

The need for unity was stressed by him both at the Cabinet meeting as well as the closed door JLP meeting. But the detractors of Mr. Borbora made it amply clear to the high command observer that they were determined to carry their fight to the finish.

The failure of Mr. Hegde's mission should not mean any immediate threat to the Borbora Ministry because even before Mr. Hegde's arrival at Gauhati, news had been given out by the Ministerialists that they had succeeded in persuading the Party Chief, Mr. Chandra Shekhar to send Union Steel Minister Biju Patnaik to "assess the situation and report back to Delhi", a job for which precisely Mr. Hegde had been sent.

Obviously, both the Ministerialists as well as the Janata high command are trying to postpone the showdown in Assam. But if the attempts at making time are in the hope that the two groups could be brought to compromise, the exercise is doomed to fail.

The dissidents spokesman yesterday claimed that their strength had further increased from 33 to 42. The Janata Party has a total of 60 Legislators in the 126 member Assam Assembly. It remains in office with the support of four tribal council legislators, some independents and the CPM group.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hegde expressed his disapproval of the Chief Minister, Mr. Borbora's action in convening the meeting of the ad hoc committee of the Assam Janata Party when the State Council of the Party has already been elected. He declined an invitation to attend the meeting of the ad hoc committee causing much dismay in the Chief Minister's camp.

Incidentally, Mr. Borbora is also the President of the ad hoc committee. Mr. Hegde yesterday asked the newly elected State Council members to elect their office-bearers without any further delay.

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