

Centre wants Assam talks in Delhi

From Our Delhi Office
NOV 17 : The Centre has rejected the demand of the Assam agitators to hold further rounds of talks on the foreigners issue in Gauhati. Instead, it has renewed its invitation to the All - Assam Students Union and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad to come to New Delhi for discussions either on November 19 or "on any mutually convenient date".

The AASU and the AAGSP have already announced plans to resume on November 19 — after a lapse of about 10 months — their State-wide agitation on the foreigners issue. Earlier, on November 10, the had organised a rally in Gauhati which was not much of a success.

At the end of the 14th round of the talks here the AASU president, Mr. Prafulla Mahanta, and the AAGSP leader Mr. Atul Bora, had decided that they would not come back to New Delhi for talks and that any further round should take place in Assam, preferably at Gauhati.

The Union Home Secretary, Mr. T. N. Chaturvedi, in a communication addressed to Mr. Mahanta and Mr. Bora today appealed to them to review their decision to resume the agitation and help maintain an atmosphere conducive to finding out a satisfactory solution "and avoid inconvenience to the people of Assam."

He also offered to visit Gauhati for a day or two sometime later if that became necessary.

Mr. Chaturvedi said he had been pained at the agitators' decision to resume the stir as he had been expecting a "positive response" from them.

The communication makes it clear that while the Government

would welcome any opportunity for talks on the subject, it would not hesitate in dealing with a firm hand any attempt to paralyse life in Assam which has already suffered on this count.

The last round of talks was bogged down on the Assam delegations' insistence that their 17-point proposal be accepted in toto. While the Government has, during the various rounds of talks, shown inclination to concede some ground, the agitators' tough stand on the criteria for detection of foreigners has remained unchanged.

In the letter to Mr Mohanta and Mr Atul Bora, Mr Chaturvedi has written : ".... I have given most careful thought to your suggestion to have talks at Gauhati on 21st November, but regret to say that it would not be convenient for me to do so. Nowever, as I told you, I could make a brief visit to Gauhati sometime later if necessary".

"I have been, in fact, expecting a positive response to my invitation to have talks in Delhi on the 19th November. However if this date does not suit you, another date can be fixed".

"I am pained to know that, in the meantime, you have announced a programme of agitation from 19th November onwards. I trust that you would review your decision as it is extremely important to maintain an atmosphere conducive for finding a satisfactory solution and also avoid inconvenience to the people in Assam.

UNI adds : The Assam Congress(I) Legislature Party today appealed to the agitation leaders to abandon the agitational programme and come to the negotiation table in a constructive way to find a solution to the foreigners problem.

ACLP(I) leader Syeda Anwara Taimur in a statement said the 36-hour statewide bandh from November 19 and other agitational programmes announced

by the agitators was 'most unfortunate.' It would vitiate the atmosphere and cause inconvenience and hardship to the people, particularly the poorer sections who earn their bread by daily labour.

On the issue of foreign nationals, the Central Government held several rounds of talks with agitation leaders and some progress had been achieved. The discussion was to be resumed again from November 19 as agreed. Thus, the Government has been persevering to find out a just and acceptable solution to all on the vexed issue, Mrs. Taimur said.

The ACLP(I) leader further said that "all would admit that a congenial atmosphere is necessary for solving such a complicated national problem."

People had already suffered a lot and the students who had lost two precious years, would again face dislocation of their academic pursuit if the agitation revived again, she said.

Mrs. Taimur also appealed to the people to cooperate with the Government for maintaining a peaceful life of the community.

I.A. FLIGHTS RESCHEDULED
In view of the 36 hour Assam Bandh starting on November 19, Indian Airlines will operate a combined Boeing 737 flight (IC-219/229/213) from Calcutta. The flight, which will leave Calcutta at 6-15 a.m. on November 19, will operate to Gauhati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Gauhati, Imphal, Gauhati and back to Calcutta.

Indian Airlines will operate a F.27 flight from Calcutta to Dimapur via Agartala at 6-15 a.m.

On November 20, IC-209 and 229 will be combined to operate Calcutta, Gauhati, Dibrugarh, Gauhati, back to Calcutta at 10 a.m.

The F-27 service to Dimapur will also operate via Agartala.

SECURITY STEPS
Meanwhile the Assam Government decided to deploy armed forces to run the Posts and Telegraphs services in the State during the 36-hour Assam Bandh, called by the all Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad from 5 a.m. on November 19 on 'foreigner issue'.

State Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra said that security measures all over the State had been tightened and forces were being adequately deployed to maintain law and order during the bandh.

Governor Prakash Mehra reviewed the security arrangements with his advisers and

senior civil, police and army officials at the Rai Bhavan during the day.

The Chief Secretary further said it had been made clear to the Government employees that their absence during the bandh would be dealt with severely making them liable for pay cut, break in services, suspension and arrest under essential services Act.

Necessary facilities including transport would be provided to the employees for attending their duties, he said.

The agitators have exempted only a few essential services from the purview of the bandh. The Posts and Telegraphs services have not been exempted.

BADH OPPOSED

Our Gauhati office adds: The Citizens' Rights Preservation Committee (C.R.P.C.), Assam, has opposed the 36-hour 'Assam bandh' call and other agitational programmes of the A.A.S.U and the A.A.G.S.P.

In a statement issued to the Press today, Mr Kalibada Sen, president and Mr Sirajul Haque, M.L.A. and General Secretary of the C.R.P.C. have expressed "grave concern" at the resumed agitational programme of the AASU and the AAGSP and appealed to all sections of people not to respond to such programmes like bandhs, "rasta roko" etc.

They also reminded the Government about its bounden duty to enforce peace, harmony and law and order.

They further exhorted the agitationists to eschew agitational path and respond to the Central Government's offer for continuing negotiations to find out a solution acceptable to all.

Mr Manindra Roy, President of the Purbattar Bangali Samaj, in a statement issued to the Press today, also opposed the proposed 'Assam bandh' call.

Mr Roy expressed "serious concern" at the revival of the agitation and said that the proposed bandh had created fresh apprehension among the minority community living in the valley districts.

Mr Amrit Borgohain and Mr Mustafa Shahidul Islam, president and general secretary respectively of the All Assam Youth Organisation in a joint statement appealed to the people in general and youths of the state in particular to oppose the proposed "Assam bandh" and other agitational programme of the agitation leaders.

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Amrita Bazar patrika.