

Court verdicts on citizenship quoted

Our Special Correspondent

THE Centre on Monday quoted from court judgments supporting its right to grant citizenship to foreigners, including former Pakistani nationals, under sections 5 (1) (a) and 5 (1) (e) of the Citizenship Act.

Officials of the Home and Law Ministries met the combined delegations of the All-Assam Students Union and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad for 75 minutes and gave them oral clarifications on the points they had raised on citizenship laws, the definition of 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' persons and settlements in tribal lands.

"It was a dictation. The officials read out the clarifications. We noted them down. We will discuss them tonight among ourselves to formulate our stand in the talks on Tuesday", a spokesman of the AASU said.

While both the Government and the agitation leaders refused to discuss details, it is understood that the Centre has not changed its definition of 'authorised persons' of the period 1961-71 who they want retained in the State.

The Government is understood to have reaffirmed that all persons whose stay is legitimised under the Constitution, various laws, special instructions issued from time to time on displaced persons and refugees as well as the national and international commitments and humanitarian considerations, are covered under the term 'authorised persons'.

The agitation leaders have all along contested the special and secret policy instructions which they say are not legally tenable.

JUDGMENTS

On the issue of the controversy on sections of the Citizenship Act, the agitation leaders had earlier quoted from Rajasthan and Allahabad High Court judgments to prove their stand that Government could not grant Pakistan nationals citizenship under Section 5 (1) (a) through the district magistrates. The Government in turn quoted from other judgments upholding its right to grant citizenship.

On the agitation leaders' point of eviction of refugees settled in tribal belts and blocks in violation of the century-old-land

regulations, Home Secretary S M H Burney said it was a State matter.

Back in Assam House, where they are staying, the members of the AASU and the AAGSP were comparing the notes they took of the official explanation. AASU president Prafulla Mahanta said the delegations would take a decision on the notes later in the night.

Meanwhile, five members of the AASU-AAGSP team were returning later in the night from Amritsar after a tour of the Indo-Pakistan border at Wagah where they had gone to see for themselves the security measures adopted by the Government.

A discussion on the Government's assurances on tightening border security in the north-eastern States will take place later.

The Assam talks also figured in the meeting of the consultative committee of MPs attached to the Home Ministry. Home Minister Zail Singh told members that talks were continuing. The issue will be discussed at the committee's continued meeting on Tuesday.

UNI adds:

AASU leaders Mahanta and Bhriгу Phukan in a statement alleged that the State Government had unleashed a reign of terror and repression in Sib-sagar, Tezpur, Barpeta and other places.

They warned that such an approach would not help in finding a solution to the foreigners' problem.

PATRIOT

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