

Govt against Assam talks at Gauhati

12/11/87

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 11 — While welcoming the All-Assam Students Union's decision to resume talks on the foreigners' issue, the Union Government feels that the venue of the next round should also be Delhi.

It may not be possible to concede the AASU's demand for holding talks at Gauhati, as was made clear to the Assam leaders before the conclusion of the last round here.

It is pointed out that the Government was anxious that concrete decisions should be taken at the next meeting with Assam leaders but it would not be possible to do so at Gauhati. A great deal of secretarial assistance was needed in such discussions and, sometimes, senior officials of other Ministries were also involved. It would not be possible for all of them to be available at Gauhati for discussions.

The Government, therefore, expects that AASU will reconsider the matter and accept its invitation to talks here on Nov. 19. However, there was no rigidity about dates which could be fixed by mutual discussions.

The Government, it is pointed out, is anxious to meet the legitimate demands of the people of Assam, keeping in view at the same time, historical factors, humanitarian considerations and the commitment to refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan. It has assured on many occasions that the linguistic and cultural identity of Assam must be preserved and promoted. The process of normalcy can be hastened if the AASU and AAGSP start appreciating the realities of the situation, the challenges that lie ahead and show goodwill and understanding in dealing with the problem.

PTI adds:

Gauhati: The All-Assam Students' Union today decided to participate in the next round of talks with the Centre on the foreigners'

issue provided the discussions are held in Gauhati.

This was the consensus at the meeting of the executive, which reviewed the situation following denial of permission for holding a public rally by Assam agitation leaders here yesterday.

The executive also decided to request the Central officials to have the talks on Nov. 20 and 21, Mr Brighu Kumar Phukan, AASU general secretary, said here.

The Central Government had invited the Assam agitation leaders for the 15th round of talks in New Delhi from Nov. 19 for solving the foreigners' issue in Assam.

Mr Phukan said that the AASU had already expressed its "unwillingness" at the last round of talks to go to Delhi again and again.

He, however, made it emphatically clear that AASU was not against continuing the discussion. "Our doors are always open," Mr Phukan added.

The AASU's decision would be placed before the central executive committee of the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, the co-sponsor of the anti-foreigners' agitation, scheduled to be held here tomorrow.

Mr Phukan said the executive discussed the next phase of agitational programmes as the Centre failed to accept the demands of the agitation leaders.

The programmes would be announced after discussion at the AAGSP meeting tomorrow.

12 - November - 1987 - Hindustan Times