

P2

'Crash talks' to end Assam impasse

NEW DELHI, July 10 (PTI):

THE Assam movement leaders began "crash talks" today aimed at working out with officials what the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, has called the "details" of a settlement of their state's foreign nationals problem.

The talks at the "mini-committee" level lasted nearly three and a half hours this afternoon and will be resumed tomorrow morning. They are designed to try and evolve an acceptable formula by tomorrow evening.

The movement leaders were persuaded by Mr. Zail Singh, Union home minister, to resume talks with officials by saying that some "alternative formula" could be discussed.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has laid to rest persistent press reports that the Assam talks were heading towards a collapse.

At her press conference this morning, she said the atmosphere for a set-

tlement was "very much better now than it was at the previous get-together."

She called the problem of the Assamese "genuine" and said the movement leaders agreed with the government that a solution had to be in accordance with the "national policy, international obligations and humanitarian considerations." It was only the details that were posing difficulty.

Mrs. Gandhi also confirmed that right from the beginning she has taken a personal hand in the negotiations although she has not actually sat at the talks.

The government approach appears to be to advance alternative formulations for categorising the 1961-71 entrants in order to strike at the minimum number that can be shifted outside Assam with "incentives" payable at the places of resettlement.

The movement leaders have offered to consider the case of those who registered themselves as refugees.

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