

Impasse in Assam talks

From Our Special
Correspondent

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The talks that the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) have been having with Union Government officials on the foreigners' issue ran into a blind alley today.

The AAGSP and AASU delegations spent two and a half hours this afternoon with the official team comprising, among others, the Home Secretary, Mr. S. M. H. Burnet and the Legal Affairs Secretary, Mr. P. B. Venkatasubramaniam, in a fruitless exercise.

There was a good deal of hair splitting on the judgements delivered by various courts interpreting the implications of various sections of the Citizenship Act of 1955 and other laws.

The Assam delegations insisted that the Government could not confer citizenship on infiltrators under Section 5(1) (A), while the officials maintained that the Act did not bar granting citizenship to refugees from Pakistan.

Legal questions

The Government side had suggested that discussions could be meaningful only in a small committee as proposed by the Home Minister, Mr. Zail Singh.

AASU seemed to have recognised the logic behind the suggestion, for it sent only its General Secretary, Mr. B. K. Phukan, for today's talks. The entire 20-member delegation of AAGSP, however, turned up.

The Assam delegation, an official spokesman later told newsmen, raised purely legal questions. Further discussions took place on those points and the necessary clarifications were given.

It was stated that the official team explained the complexity of the problem, the historical background to the influx of people from Pakistan, national commitments and Government policies.

All this did not obviously have any impact on the Assam talks, which stuck to the point that Assam could not retain the people who came into the State from East Pakistan between 1961 and 1971.

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