

No Assam formula yet: talks today

13/7/81
Hindu

From Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, July 12.

No clear-cut formula to solve the Assam tangle has emerged yet but there is an air of optimism that the talks to settle the foreigners' issue are now over the hump.

The committee of Government officials and representatives of the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU), which has been trying to evolve a mutually acceptable formula, did not meet today, as scheduled.

Instead, Government officials on the committee apprised the Home Minister, Mr. Zail Singh, this morning of the outcome of their parleys with the Assam teams. Mr. Singh had returned to Delhi late last night.

Informed sources said the Assam teams seemed to be sticking to the line which they had taken from the beginning, and, therefore it was not yet certain whether a formula acceptable to them and the Government would take shape.

In any case, the deliberations would be resumed tomorrow, most probably at the committee level, so that the

Assam delegations know what the Government's reaction is to their proposals.

The Government has assured them that apart from deporting from Assam all post-1971 infiltrators, it will assume responsibility for those of the earlier period who were once detected and deported but who managed to sneak back into the State.

The number of people who were deported between 1961 and 1969 is about three lakhs, and if the Centre assumes the responsibility for them, it will have to find homes outside Assam for these people as well as their dependents.

No correct estimates of the number of people who moved into Assam from Bangladesh after 1971 or in the 1961-71 period are available with anyone, and that has made things difficult for everybody.

Sudden postponement: The agitation leaders expressed indignation over the sudden postponement of today's meeting and doubted the sincerity of the Government in resolving the foreigner's issue, reports UNI.

The AASU president Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said frequent postponements of meetings showed the

Government's apathy. The Government was adopting "delaying tactics".

The AAGSP convenors Mr. Atul Bora and Mr. Biraj Sarma said, "this was not the way to solve what everybody had admitted was a national problem."

The reason for the postponement given to the agitation leaders by officials was that they had not been able to formulate their response and consult the Home Minister last night on the principles of detection and deletion discussed at yesterday's meeting.

Mr. Jatin Goswami of AAGSP who did not think the Government was interested in evolving a fair solution to the problem, said it was treating it as a refugee problem. "It has not been able to tell us who is a foreigner."

The Government had put forward its formula but did not want it considered within the parameters of the existing laws and the Constitution, he said, adding nothing had been achieved so far.

Mr. Goswami said as the Government formula failed to break the deadlock, Mr. Zail Singh had asked them if they had any new proposal. The Assam leaders told him that they had nothing to add to what they had suggested in October last year.

THE HINDU

13-July-1981.