

# Panel level talks on Assam

From Our Special  
Correspondent

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As a result of the intervention of the Union Home Minister Mr. Zail Singh, the talks on the Assam foreigners' issue today went back to the committee of Government officials and representatives of the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) which was set up early in the negotiations.

At an hour and a half long meeting with the AAGSP and AASU delegations, the Home Minister explained that negotiations were the only way to a solution and therefore nothing would be gained if the talks were broken off.

If the Assam delegations were not satisfied with the definition of "authorised" and "unauthorised" persons the bone of contention — given by the team of officials, efforts should now

be directed to frame some other acceptable formulation, he said.

The Assam delegations told the Home Minister that the definition given by the officials would result in the retention in Assam virtually of all those who came into the State between 1961 and 1971, and such a position was not acceptable to them.

Evidently because the Assam delegations do not want to go back empty handed after the protracted talks, they responded favourably to the Home Minister's suggestion that the Committee level talks should be revived again.

Five persons representing AAGSP and three others of AASU held prolonged negotiations in the evening with senior Government officials including the Home Ministry, Mr. S. M. H. Burney, and the Legal Affairs Secretary, Mr. P. B. Venkatasubramaniam.

The official team once again tried to explain the historical and legal com-

pulsions and said if the definition of authorised and unauthorised persons was not acceptable, the situation could be looked at in terms of legal and illegal entrants into Assam.

The discussions went on in a circle and neither the official team nor the Assam delegations were prepared to say that any progress had been made even after three and a half hours of deliberations.

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, told her press conference today that the atmosphere for settlement of the foreigners problem in Assam was "very much better now than it was at the previous get together"

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