

Assam ministry-making 9-party front move may fail

From Our Spl. Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 6 The current move by nine Opposition parties in Assam to forge an alliance to form a non-Congress-(I) ministry may fail because of the CPI-M's insistence on public denunciation of the current agitation on the "foreigner issue" by other constituents of the combination, particularly the Janata Party and Lok Dal.

The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, is understood to have been contacted over 'phone last night on behalf of the CPI-M politburo to ensure that the Assam unit of the party did not make any commitment to others until all partners of the front agreed to issue a public statement, deploring the current agitation by the AASU and the AAGSP, which has a secessionist overtone. Mr Basu has been authorised by the politburo to pre-

vail on the Assam party unit to abide by this decision.

According to the CPI-M's assessment, any ambiguity in this respect is bound to tarnish the image of the party. Besides, the lack of clarity on this sensitive question will also make such a coalition vulnerable. Hence, the CPI-M does not want to be a party to any alliance of expedience. The party has already conveyed its inhibition in this regard to the Congress (S) and other Left parties.

The Congress (S), however, has opted for such a coalition Government in Assam. Its president, Mr Sharad Pawar, today told newsmen that the high command had permitted its Assam unit to associate itself with the effort for formation of a non-Congress (I) ministry.

Meanwhile, the BJP has decided to boycott the Opposition leaders' meeting convened by the Union Home Minister, Mr Zail Singh, on the Assam issue. In his letter, conveying its boycott decision, the BJP president, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, says that discussions on a major issue like Assam can be held in "a worthwhile manner" only if the Prime Minister is also present.

Our Staff Correspondent at Gauhati adds: The SUCI has contradicted Press reports about its participation in any 10-party alliance on ministry-making in Assam.

CITIZENS' WORRY

Meanwhile, the Citizens' Right Preservation Committee, Assam, today expressed its "grave concern" at the reported discussion on the modalities for identification of so-called foreigners who entered Assam during the 1961-71 period and the fate of those who were identified as 'foreigners'.

The CRPC maintained that any decision for "mass identification" would virtually lead to violence and forcible, indiscriminate evacuation of innocent people belonging to linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities.

Mr Nibaron Bora, a prominent leader of the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, said that the Union Home Minister should have discussed the Assam problem in the parliamentary consultative committee of the Home Ministry instead of inviting Opposition leaders for discussion on the progress of talks with the Assam agitation leaders.

The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad convener, Mr Biraj Sarma, said that there was no alternative for the people of Assam except to carry on the struggle till their demands were fulfilled.

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