

AASU, Parishad Urged To Reconsider Stand

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, Nov. 9.—The Union Government and leaders of the Opposition in Parliament today urged leaders of the agitation in Assam to continue their discussions with the Government in a "constructive spirit" to arrive at a solution on the foreign nationals issue.

In a joint appeal to the All Assam Students' Union and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad—the two main organizations spearheading the agitation in the State—the Government and the Opposition leaders also appealed to them to reconsider their latest proposals. They felt that the position adopted by AASU and the Gana Sangram Parishad in their recent talks was "extreme".

The joint statement came at the end of the two-and-a-half hour meeting which was, as announced earlier, boycotted by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Janata Party and the Lok Dal.

On the Opposition side the meeting was attended by Mr Indrajit Gupta (CPI), Mr Samar Mukherjee (CPI-M), Mr C. I. Dandapani (DMK), Mr Chitta Basu (F.B.), Mr Neelashithedesan Nalla (DSP), Mr Murasoli Naran (DMK), Mr Sathavani Muthu (AIADMK), Mr Bhola Paswan Shastri (CS), and Mr Yogendra Sharma (CPI).

The Union Government was represented by Mr Zail Singh, Union Home Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for Commerce, Steel and Mines; Mr P. Shiv Shankar, Union Law Minister, Mr Bishma Narain Singh, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Works and Housing; Mr P. Venkatasubbiah, Minister of State for Home Affairs, and Mr Sitaram Kesari, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs.

Officials who attended the meeting included the Cabinet Secretary, Mr Krishnaswamy Rao Saheb; the Home Secretary, Mr T. N. Chaturvedi, the Law Secretary, Mr P. B. Venkatasubramanian; the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr M. L. Kampani; and Mr K. M. L. Chhabra of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

An official spokesman later said the Opposition leaders had considered the latest proposals received from AASU and AAGSP and they felt that both organizations had taken an extreme position. He said the Government had invited leaders of Opposition parties in Parliament to apprise it of the course of discussions conducted so far between the representatives of AASU, AAGSP and the Government.

Rejecting the Government's invitation to the Opposition parties to attend today's talks on Assam, the Lok Dal leader Mr George Fernandes, felt the convening of a round-table conference of all concerned, including the leaders of the Assam agitation was necessary.

In a letter to Mr Bishma Narain Singh, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr Fernandes said his party received the invitation of November 6 when the party president, Mr Charan Singh, was away. The letter, released to the Press, said there was not a line on the Government's position on various issues raised by the Assam agitation leaders. "For any meaningful discussion on the Assam situation, it was most imperative that we know the Government's mind too," he said.

Mr Fernandes, however, assured the Government that his party was keen on helping to find a solution to the Assam situation, "but we feel that the Government has been guilty of not only procrastination on this issue, but has injected into a national problem both communal and partisan angles", he alleged.

"The goings-on in Assam during the past few months have also caused us deep concern. The way the Congress (I) Ministry was installed and subsequently sustained could not but have contributed to aggravating the situation in the State. We notice that even now, after you sent your letter to the Opposition leaders, the Home Minister has sounded at least one Opposition party to join in a coalition Government with the Congress (I) in Assam."

PTI and UNI add: Mr Nadar staged a walk-out at today's meeting, stating that the Government was not coming forward with the latest situation in Assam. He wanted that the Government state clearly its views on the Assam issue and acquaint the Opposition with details of the negotiations conducted at various levels. Mr Nadar told reporters later that even after the discussion, the Government "is not able to state its stand on Assam clearly." He said he had pointed out earlier that a serious and purposeful discussion could be held only when the Prime Minister was present.

Troops Alerted In Assam

GAUHATI, Nov. 9.—Even as the Assam agitation leaders remained firm on their decision to hold a mass rally at the State capital tomorrow, the unrelenting State Government today alerted the Army and intensified security measures to maintain law and order, report PTI and UNI.

The agitation leaders are scheduled to meet here late tonight to finalize their strategy for holding the rally, meant to apprise the people of the latest position of the movement on the foreign nationals issue and of the progress of the talks in Delhi for settling the issue.

They said that if the Government did not want a confrontation, it should respect democratic norms and permit the rally to be held.

The Assam Government, in a Press release tonight, justified its action in refusing permission to the sponsors—the All Assam Students' Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad—apprehending a serious breach of peace since various other organizations have also sought permission for similar rallies on the same day.

A large number of Central Reserve Police Force jawans were deployed in vulnerable points in Gauhati today in view of the agitators' determination to hold a mass rally at the Judges Field tomorrow. Security forces cordoned off the entire Judges Field area to thwart any attempt to hold the rally.

The All Assam Students' Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad have called the rally "to explain to the people" the outcome of 14 rounds of talks on the issue with the Centre.

The Chief Secretary, Mr Ramesh Chandra, told reporters that the troops were alerted to help the civil authorities maintain law and order. The State Government has also warned its employees that unauthorized abstention from work and their participation in the rally would render them liable to prosecution and disciplinary action, including pay cuts, break in service and dismissal from service.

Four persons, including three student leaders, were taken into preventive custody in Jorhat today under Section 151 CrPC it was officially stated.

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