

Another Assam round on Nov 19

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 7 — The Union Government has invited the leaders of the All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) for another round of talks on the foreigners' issue here on Nov. 19.

The invitation was sent today by the Union Home Secretary, Mr T. N. Chaturvedi, who has been associated with the discussions with the Assam leaders.

(UNI reports from Gauhati: State Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra told UNI that a communication received from Mr Chaturvedi was delivered to AASU president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and AGSP Convener Atul Bora through a special messenger today.)

As the Home Minister, Mr Zail Singh, is scheduled to discuss the Assam situation with the leaders of the Opposition parties in Parliament on Monday, he would appreciate a positive response by the Assam leaders to the invitation by the Centre, which is anxious to keep the door open for negotiations.

Official sources want the Assam leaders to abide by the commitments made by them during the earlier round of discussions in August from which an agreed draft of proposals had emerged. In the latest round, the leaders backed out of their commitment.

Another disappointing feature is that the latest proposals by the AASU and the AAGSP, except for restating their original demands and their conception of how these should be implemented did not show any appreciation of the implications involved, particularly the human aspect of the problem.

It is pointed out that the Assam leaders still insist on subjecting the entire population in Assam to detection on the basis of the National Register of Citizens 1951 and the electoral rolls of 1952 and all other evidence is sought to be excluded.

On the contentious issue of the treatment to be given to the 1961-71 entrants, the proposals do not reflect any change in their attitude. In fact, they expect that even Indian citizens who are members of the families of the persons who they regard as foreigners, should be moved out of Assam. This is totally unacceptable to the Government.

The latest proposals do not show any consideration for refugees, displaced persons and migrants who, for reasons well known, had to leave their homes and seek shelter in India. That would amount to a total disregard of the national commitments in this behalf.

Attention is also drawn to the demand for dispersal of refugees to other States which runs counter to the basic tradition and culture of the people apart from the fact that it would result in a tremendous amount of hardship if people are to be uprooted a second time. Many other States have also had their share of refugees from Pakistan (east and west), Burma and Sri Lanka.

According to the proposals made by the Assam leaders foreigners who entered Assam in between 1961 and 1.1.71 shall be detected, their names shall be deleted from the electoral rolls if already included, and the Government shall settle such foreigners along with

their families in places outside Assam within a period not more than six months from the date of detection.

It shall be guaranteed that these foreigners, after their settlement outside Assam, shall not be allowed to return to Assam. Any foreigner so settled in a place outside Assam if found to have re-entered the state shall be deported immediately.

To prevent the re-entry of such foreigners so settled outside Assam, the provisions of the Bengal-Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 (Regulation 5 of 1873) shall be fully implemented forthwith.

It can now be revealed that what the Assam leaders had agreed in August last was that the foreigners who had entered Assam between 1951-61 shall be regularised. For this purpose, this category will be identified so as to distinguish it from other categories.

It had also been agreed that foreigners who came to Assam between 1961 and 24th March, 1971 shall be detected. An impartial official machinery will be set up for this purpose by the Government.

The person detected as a foreigner will be given an opportunity to provide evidence to establish before a special tribunal that he is qualified to be a citizen. An appeal shall lie within 45 days to a special appellate tribunal against any adjudication or trial by such tribunal of any dispute.

The Government promised to take practical steps to settle such foreigners whose cases have been rejected or whose name has been deleted from the electoral roll, in a place outside Assam. Incentives would be provided to such foreigners.

For the purpose of detection, foreigners will continue to be detected on the basis of the Constitution and the relevant laws including the Citizenship Act, Foreigners Act and Passport Act. In doing so the NRC 1951, electoral rolls including those of 1952 land records available with Government, birth and death registers, (records of Government schools and education department) and other relevant public documents may be made use of. In identifying foreigners due procedure will be followed and it will be ensured that there is no harassment.

Cong-I seeks Janata help in Assam

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 7—The Congress-I is seeking the support of the Janata Party in forming a Ministry in Assam which is now under President's rule.

The matter is understood to have figured today at a meeting between Union Home Minister Zail Singh and Janata Party president Chandra Shekhar.

Mr Chandra Shekhar has reportedly made no commitment and told the Home Minister that the matter would have to be discussed by his party.

He was reportedly critical of the handling of the Assam situation by the Centre and felt that the Congress-I was only keen on forming a government in the State. The Janata Party was interested in finding a solution to the problem.

The Janata Party president is leaving for Bombay tomorrow for three days. It is not known yet whether the Home Minister would pursue the matter further with him. The combined opposition is expected to meet the Assam Governor tomorrow to stake its claim to form a ministry.

AASU rally in open disallowed

GAUHATI, Nov. 7 (UNI) — The Assam Government today denied permission to the All-Assam Students Union and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad to organise their proposed central rally in the Judges Field here on Nov. 10, according to official sources.

The sources said this evening that no permission would be given to hold the rally and meetings in the open but there would be no restriction if the rally was organised in closed doors or halls.

Adequate precautionary measures had been taken to maintain law and order in the State.

The call for the rally has been given jointly by the AASU and the AAGSP to apprise the people of the progress of their talks with the Central Government on the foreign nationals issue.

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