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Army alerted in Assam

GAUHATI, Dec. 29.

Army was alerted today to come to the aid of the civil authorities in any eventualities during the proposed 36-hour "road blockade" beginning at 5 a.m. on December 31 in Assam.

Such a blockade has been sponsored by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) as the second phase of their current month-long agitation on the foreign nationals' problem.

The Chief Secretary, Mr. Ramesh Chandra, told PTI that the Government had "effectively deployed all available forces" and taken necessary precautionary measures to maintain the road and rail communication uninterrupted during the period.

The Chief Secretary also said all the authorities concerned had been instructed "to keep the national highways and important roads free from any kind of obstruction."

Patrolling by security forces has been intensified and "fixed pickets" are being set up at main points of all important roads.

The authorities have also been directed to make preventive arrest, if necessary.

Mr. Chandra said security measures had also been taken to ensure safety of rail tracks and passengers.

The trains would run with armed escort, while the movement of trucks,

buses and all other vehicles would be organised in convoys at "appointed hours" during the period.

The district and sub-divisional authorities had also been asked to take "effective measures" as required to remove possible road blocks.

The sponsors of the movement have exempted trains for the first 24 hours of the blockade programme.

Besides, medical and milk vans, water tankers, police maintenance vehicles of Assam Electricity board, CRPF, military as also vehicles engaged in law and order duty have been exempted from the purview of the programme.

All other Government and private vehicles, including bicycles, were covered under the proposed blockade movement —PTI.

Simultaneous talks and agitation

Our Gauhati Correspondent reports:

The Assam movement leaders have reiterated their earlier decision that talks and agitation on the foreign nationals' issue will continue simultaneously.

A month-long programme of agitation has already been started, with a two-day "poster campaign" that ended yesterday.

The current phase of agitation will conclude with a 12-hour "Assam curfew" (5 a.m. to 5 p.m.) on Republic Day. They say they will participate in the

proposed tripartite meeting and will hold discussions on the basis of their 17-point draft proposals, already submitted to the Government, regarding the detection of foreigners, deletion of their names from the voters' lists and their dispersal or deportation. But they will continue the agitation as per programme chalked out from time to time till a satisfactory solution of the problem.

According to present programme, the "poster campaign" will be followed by 36-hour road blockade from 5 a.m. of December 31, march to Dispur on January 4, defying Sec. 144 Cr. P. C. to submit a memorandum demanding the stoppage of "atrocities on Government employees", civil disobedience on January 10 and 11 when people have been asked to travel in trains, buses and ferries without ticket, not to buy postage stamps or make any financial transactions in post offices, and not to pay amusement taxes while witnessing cinema; celebration of "Silpi Divas" on January 7 centrally at Tezpur to pay homage to artistes.

The month-long programme will be rounded off by the imposition of "Assam curfew" by AASU and AAGSP on January 26 prohibiting people from coming out of their houses during hours of "curfew". Those violating the "curfew" will be arrested by the volunteers of AASU and AAGSP.

The overall law and order situation in the State is normal so far.