

# Assam agitators urged to shun rigidity

NEW DELHI, Nov 9 (UNI) —Leaders of the Congress (I) and several other parties on Monday appealed to the Assam agitationists to give up their "extreme position" and continue discussions with the Government in a "constructive spirit".

At a meeting convened by the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr Bhisma Narain Singh, the leaders felt that in their latest proposals the All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) "have taken an extreme position".

The meeting which lasted for about three hours was attended by representatives of the Congress (S), CPI, CPI(M), DMK, AIADMK, Forward Bloc, DSP, Indian Muslim League and RSP.

The Lok Dal the Janata and the Bharatiya Janata Party boycotted the meeting.

Mr Neela Lohita Dasan Nadar of DSP walked out shortly before the meeting ended protesting against the Government's "failure to protect a clear stand" on Assam.

Besides, Mr Bhisma Narain Singh, Home Minister, Mr Zail Singh, the Commerce Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the Law Minister, Mr Shiva Shankar, the Minister of State for Home, Mr P. Venkatasubbiah and the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr Sitaram Kesari, were present at the meeting.

The opposition leaders were appraised of the course of the discussions so far held between the representatives of AASU and AAGSP and the Government.

Briefing newsmen, an official spokesman said in the context of the developments in Assam the leaders of the opposition parties considered the latest proposals received from the AASU and AAGSP

and observed that in these proposals AASU and AAGSP had taken an extreme position.

The leaders called upon AASU and AAGSP to "reconsider their latest stand and continue discussions with the Government in a constructive spirit so as to arrive at a solution satisfactory to all sections of the people," the spokesman said.

He replied in the negative to a question whether the rally to be held by the agitationists on Tuesday in Gauhati figured during the discussion.

The Opposition leaders present at the meeting were Mr Bhoja Paswan Shastri (Congress-S) Mr Indrajit Gupta and Mr Yogendra Sharma (CPI), Mr Samar Mukherjee (CPI-M), Mr C. T. Dhandapani and Mr Murali Maran (DMK), Dr Satyavani Muthu (AIADK) Mr Tridib Choudhury (RSP), Mr Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait (Indian Union Muslim League), Mr Chitta Basu (Forward Bloc) and Mr Neela Lohita Dasan Nadar (DSP).

Mr Neela Lohita Dasan Nadar told newsmen 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.

He said the Prime Minister was "globe trotting" when the north-east "is in flame" and border states in the west and north were "disturbed". The ruling Congress (I) had been trying to resolve the Assam problem through the office of the Governor, he said.

The Government, Mr Nadar said, had not so far replied to his party's inquiry whether there had been any explicit or implied understanding between the Prime Minister and the late Bangladesh President

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

He wanted the Government to formulate a clear stand on Assam and publish details of various negotiation held so far before any fruitful discussion could take place.

Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party President, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, said in Indore on Monday, that the Union Government had sought to bring about a confrontation between the Opposition and the Assam agitators by inviting them to the meeting in New Delhi.

What useful purpose would such talks serve when a massive rally had been called by the All-Assam Students Union and the Gana Sangram Parishad leaders, he asked while talking to newsmen.

About the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr Bhisma Narain Singh's letter asking him to reconsider his decision to boycott the meeting, Mr Vajpayee said, "BJP has not boycotted the meeting, but has expressed its inability to participate in it because its date are fixed without taking any consent from him."

He wanted Mr Singh to explain why the dates of the meeting were arbitrarily advanced from November 18 to November 9 by the Consultative Committee of the Home Ministry.

Mr Vajpayee was of the opinion that it would be better if the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, would be present at such a meeting.

He said the main hurdle in solving the Assam tangle was the issue of infiltrators who came before 1971. Nothing concrete had been suggested by the Government on this issue. The infiltration was still continuing on a large scale.

He alleged that there had been a "flood of immigrants" into West Bengal recently from Bangladesh.

10 - November - 1987 - The Financial Express.