

Assam leaders poised for next round of talks

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Behind-the-scene activity is on to resume negotiations on the foreign nationals issue and to ensure that the next round of talks, likely after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's return from Mexico, yields concrete results.

While there is no substantiation of the speculation in some quarters about the agitations leaders having yet Rajiv Gandhi at Dimapur, Nagaland, during his recent tour to the northeast, efforts are being made at other levels to bring about a compromise.

But there is still a wot of suspense as to the attitude with which the two sides will approach the next round. The agitators do not yet know the Government's mind on the draft proposals submitted by them about three weeks back. At the same time, the Government is still trying to figure out what exactly made the agitation leadership take a rather uncompromising stand on certain issues.

Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra has been in New Delhi. It is expected in some circles that when he returns the draft of clarifications will be with him.

Observers say even though the Centre may have liked to delay things a little more because of the problems in Punjab, it is precisely because of that reason now that it will keep active contact with the Assam agitators. It is interesting to see how the agitators in Assam have used the strife in Punjab as a stick to beat the Union Home Minister with and, also, as a veiled instrument of threat.

The AASU and AAGSP leaders have been issuing statements regularly defying Mr. Zail Singh to call the Khalistan movement secessionist while "he had lost no time using that adjective for the Assam agitation". Similarly, there has been a stream of sarcastic letters in the local press from people taking note of the fact that the Khalistan movement has begun in the Home Minister's own state.

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