

# Assam leaders urged to revise stand on aliens

From Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 9.

The Union Government and several Opposition leaders today exchanged views on the foreigners' issue in Assam and appealed to the leaders of the All-Assam Students' Union and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad to reconsider their stand.

A statement read out to newsmen by a senior Home Ministry official after the meeting appealed to the AASU and the AAGSP to "continue discussions with the Government in a constructive spirit so as to arrive at a solution satisfactory to all sections of the people."

The meeting was called by the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Bishma Narayan Singh, to apprise the Opposition leaders of the course of discussions so far between the Government and the AASU and AAGSP representatives.

Mr. Zail Singh, Union Home Minister, who conducted the meeting, gave a resume of the developments so far, including the latest proposal of the AASU and AAGSP.

**Extreme position:** According to the statement read out after the meeting, the Opposition leaders, after considering the latest proposals of the AASU and AAGSP, observed that they had taken

"an extreme position."

One of the main points made by the AASU and AAGSP in their proposals is that all those "foreigners" who entered Assam between 1961 and 1971 should be shifted from the State and barred from re-entering Assam.

In the earlier rounds of talks with the Government, the AASU and AAGSP had taken a less stand in regard to those "aliens" who streamed into Assam during 1961-71 and given the impression that "authorised entrants" could continue to stay there. There was however, a lot of hair splitting on the definition of "authorised entrants."

Official sources are of the view that the latest stand of the AASU and AAGSP marks a departure from their earlier stance and indicates a hardening of their attitude.

It was not clear from the briefing given after today's meeting whether the Government had spelt out any specific formula to solve the tangle.

**Cut off year:** Some of the Opposition leaders in their observations however emphasised that there should be no deviation from the earlier all-party consensus that for the purpose of identifying foreigners, 1971 should be taken as the cut-off year.

The Home Minister said the Government had made no departure, and was discussing the modalities of dealing

with the problem with the AASU and AAGSP.

In addition to the Home Minister and the Parliamentary Affairs Minister today's meeting was attended by the Commerce Minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, the Law Minister, Mr. P. Shiv Shankar, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. P. Venkatasubbaiah, and the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Sitaram Kesari.

On the Opposition side were present Mr. Samar Mukherjee CPI (M), Mr. Indrajit Gupta and Mr. Yogendra Sharma (CPI), Mr. C. T. Dhandapani and Mr. Murasoli Maran (DMK), Mr. Tridib Chaudhuri (RSP), Mr. Chitta Basu (Forward Bloc), Mr. Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait (Muslim League), Mr. Bhola Paswan Shastri (Congress-S), Dr. Mrs. Sathiyani Muthu (AIADMK), and Mr. Neelalohithadasan Nadar (DSP).

Mr. Nadar, who read out a statement at the meeting outlining his party's views, left it shortly before it ended.

He remarked to newsmen that there was no use holding such meetings unless the Prime Minister was present and the Government was prepared to spell out a clear-cut policy.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Party did not participate in the meeting because they felt no useful purpose would be served by it.

The Lok Dal stayed away from today's talks as it had from the November 24, 1980, meeting. Its Deputy Leader in Parliament, Mr. George Fernandes, in a letter to the Parliamentary Affairs

Minister suggested postponement of the meeting.

Mr. Fernandes accused the Government of procrastination on the issue and of "injecting into a national problem both communal and partisan angles."

He also charged the Assam administration of high-handedness in dealing with such "a simple matter as the holding of a public meeting by the leaders of the Assam movement."

## Steps taken to foil rally

GAUHATI, Nov. 9.

The Assam Government today took firm steps to thwart the mass rally the foreigners issue agitators propose to hold tomorrow in the Judges Field here.

While troops were alerted to be on hand to assist the civil authorities, security forces cordoned off the entire Judges Field to prevent any public gathering there in defiance of the prohibitory orders in force.

The All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), sponsors of the foreigners issue movement, have given the call for the rally to "explain to the people the outcome of 14 rounds of talks on the issue with the Centre."

Meanwhile, the agitation leaders once again requested the Centre through the State Government to give them permission to hold the rally.—UNI.

## Assam coalition: Zail clarifies

From Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 9.

The Congress (I) has wriggled out of the proposal for a coalition with the Janata Party in Assam but will pursue its bid for cooperation with the Congress (S) in Kerala with the aim of forming a new Ministry.

The Home Minister, Giani Zail Singh, today denied having proposed a coalition between the Congress (I) and the Janata Party in Assam. He told the meeting of Opposition leaders that,

in his telephonic talk with the Janata chief, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, he sought that party's general cooperation on the Assam issue. He rang up Mr. Chandra Shekhar because he (Janata chief) had not been attending the meetings of Opposition leaders, called by the Government, in the past on Assam, and thought it proper to contact him on the eve of today's meeting. (At that time, the Janata Party's decision to decline the Government's invitation was not known).

Mr. Chandra Shekhar, according to the Home Minister's reported account,

complained that the Government had sought to break the Janata Party in the State. To this, Mr. Zail Singh said he replied that if they themselves could not manage their party, did they want the Congress (I) to manage it? All this, according to Mr. Zail Singh, was punctuated with light remarks and no suggestion was made for a coalition.

Reacting to Mr. Zail Singh's account of his talk with Mr. Chandra Shekhar, Mr. Varma, Janata Secretary, said today it was a case of extreme flippancy to suggest that what was said was not meant.

10-NOVEMBER-1981

The Hindu.