

# Assam students fresh offer 'unacceptable'

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Dec. 21 — The latest proposals of the Assam agitators contain suggestions of an "extreme" nature and the Government considers them "unacceptable".

This announcement was made in the Lok Sabha today by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr Yogendra Makwana, while replying to a debate on a statutory resolution bringing certain services within the Essential Services Maintenance (Assam) Act and extending the President's rule in the State by another six months.

The House also approved the Assam Appropriation Bill moved by Finance Minister R. Venkataraman, in respect of supplementary demands.

Listing some of the proposals, Mr Makwana said the demand for denying the application of Citizens Act of 1955 to the children of the "foreigners" (as identified in accordance with the agitators' formula), detection of "foreigners" and their segregation outside Assam, prevention of their re-entry regulated by an inner-line system, amendment of Article 323(B) for constituting tribunals and monitoring rights, could not be entertained.

While there was sharp disagreement on the analysis of the situation, all sections of the House were agreed on one point. The Assam issue was a national problem and it called for an urgent solution. Mr Makwana said the very fact that there had been 14 rounds of consultations with the leaders of agitation demonstrated the anxiety of the Government.

BJP leader A. B. Vajpayee was

all praise for the patriotic youngmen of Assam who were ceaselessly struggling to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. Their agitation was not against minorities—linguistic or religious. They were opposed to infiltrators, who were overtaking their traditions and culture, apart from becoming an instrument in political balance.

Describing the agitation as "by and large peaceful", Mr Vajpayee warned the Government that strong-arm methods would be counterproductive. He demanded an early solution of the problem which could not be postponed indefinitely. Instead of conspiring to instal an unrepresentative Ministry, the Assembly should be dissolved and fresh elections ordered.

The BJP leader agreed nothing should be done to cause hardship to the minorities. At the same time, no country could afford to keep its borders open for all times. But, those who were resisting the infiltrators were terrorised. On Nov. 29, a group of students numbering 49, was arrested, confined to a bus for 24 hours and not allowed to get down even for nature's call. How long the people would tolerate it, he asked.

Mr Ravindra Varma (Janata) cautioned the Government against precipitating a "confrontation" with the leaders of the agitation. The way the Government was moving in the matter showed it did not want to come to terms with the agitators. Otherwise, what prevented the Government from agreeing to detection of the "foreigners" deletion of their names from electoral rolls and disenfranchisement.

Mr Chitta Basu (FB) and Mr G. M. Banatwalla (ML) expressed their views which were just opposite to what Mr Vajpayee and Mr Varma had said. According to them, the entire agitation was neither secular nor patriotic. It was directed against the integrity of the country and against the religious minority.

Despite his general reservation about President's rule, Mr Banatwalla said the developments in Assam made it inevitable. He also asked the Government to explain how a distinction was being made on religious considerations inasmuch as the Hindus were to be treated 'authorised refugees' and Muslims as 'infiltrators'.

Mr Makwana assured the member that no discrimination on religious ground was contemplated.

As regards the action taken by the Government against unlawful entrants, the Minister gave figures from 1971 to 1980 and told the House, in particular, Mr Vajpayee, that 1,30,876 persons had been detected during this period and 1,09,750 deported.

Mr Makwana also told Mr Vajpayee that the agitation had not been that non-violent. As many as 290 precious lives had been lost. There had been 120 cases of bomb-explosion.

He stoutly defended the presence of the BSF and the CRP, pointing out that the Government would provide all protection to the minorities and other peaceful citizens in Assam.

Hindustan Times, 22/Dec/1981