

Assam talks back to square one

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, July 13.

THE Assam talks at the mini-committee level today reached an impasse and the AASU president, Mr. Prafulla Mahanta, feels that only the prime minister's intervention can now prevent a total collapse.

Frustrated by the "fruitlessness" of the two-week long parleys, the student leader, Mr. Deba Bora, said: "We are being pushed back into the streets. It means satyagraha and picketing. We must fight till the last drop of our blood."

An official spokesman, however, did not think that the talks had come to an end. He said that the results of discussions would be reported back to the home minister, Mr. Zail Singh. It would be for the minister to decide the next step.

The home minister will most certainly like to meet the agitation leaders again when it will be decided whether to break off the talks or not. The agitation leaders maintain that they have twice responded to Mr. Zail Singh's appeal to continue the discussions. They will not sit for talks again if the home minister does not show "sincerity" about coming to an amicable settlement.

They say that the talks have been going on endlessly without having moved even a single step forward. The same points had been discussed over and over again, but the government's stand remained where it was when the discussions began one and a half years ago. "They are only repeating their arguments", Mr. Nibaran Bora, senior AAGSP leader, said.

He said he did not think any useful purpose would be served by continu-

ing the parleys and as if to emphasise that the point of no return had been reached, he added that a press conference would be called tomorrow to explain the causes of the breakdown of the negotiations.

The student leader, Mr. Deba Bora, said that "nothing has been achieved to our satisfaction. The result is zero. We have lost much of our valuable time."

The impasse in the talks was reached when the mini-committee was discussing the modalities of detection of foreigners. The agitation leaders got the impression that the government did not want to disperse any person from the state. That, for the agitation leaders, is a basic issue. They say that they had agreed to retain all "foreigners" of the 1951-61 period in Assam on condition that those of the 1961-71 decade would be dispersed to other states. The government, apparently, was not accepting this condition.

The government had also rejected their demand that the detection of foreigners should begin from 1951 on the basis of the national register of citizens and the 1952 electoral rolls.

UNI adds:

The AAGSP convener, Mr. Biraj Sarma, said the government had refused to accept their formula on the principles of detection. The home secretary, Mr. S. M. H. Burney, had told them that the government had to honour the policy instructions which permitted the erstwhile East Pakistan Hindus to seek shelter in this country in the wake of the 1965 war.

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