

Assam talks from today

From Our Special
Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Oct. 28.

A fresh effort to hammer out a solution of the foreigners issue mutually acceptable to the Government and leaders of the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad and the All-Assam Students' Union begins here tomorrow.

A six-member team of negotiators representing the AAGSP and AASU arrived here tonight from Gauhati to pick up the thread from where it was left at the last round of talks which ended on August 23.

There is a major change in the composition of the team in that the AAGSP is now being represented by Mr. Nibaran Bora and Mr. Akul Bora and not by Mr. Arup Bardoloye and Mr. Pabindra Deka.

The AASU group, which is led by its President, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, is more or less the same.

The change in the composition of the AAGSP team, coupled with an obvious stiffening in the stand of the AAGSP and the AASU has set official sources wondering whether the next round of talks would yield any fruitful results.

The stiffening of the agitation leaders' attitude is reflected in their stand that "all aliens who entered Assam between 1961 and 1971 would be moved out of the State."

In the earlier rounds there was a glimmer of hope that they might relent and at least make a concession in regard to bona fide refugees and others who are regarded as authorised entrants from Bangladesh.

Another tough condition that the Assam leaders have set is that the tribunals which would detect aliens should be set up not under the Foreigners Act but under the Constitution. For this the Constitution should be changed. Moreover they want to bar the High court from being an appellate authority against decisions of the tribunals and want the Supreme Court to be the only appellate authority.

This is interpreted to mean that the tribunals should be manned by judicial officers of the rank of High Court judges. The exclusion of the High Court from hearing appeals, it is feared, would cause undue hardship.

Ironically, it is pointed out, the tribunals were first set up in 1964 at the instance of the minorities who used to allege that they were being harassed by the police and others.

After examining the citizenship status of the aggrieved party the tribunals used to give recommendations which were not binding on the executive authority.

But now it is the agitation leaders who are asking for tribunals

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