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Amrita Bazar

Assam talks heading for a deadlock

FROM OUR DELHI OFFICE

July 13 : Despite intense discussions for four hours today, once again the Assam talks at the mini committee level seemed to be heading for a deadlock as an alternative formula could not emerge and as sharp differences continued to exist over the draft submitted by the Assam leaders for detection of the foreigners.

However, there were still hopes of salvaging the talks

as the Government representatives engaged in talks with the agitation leaders are expected to brief the Union Home Minister Mr Zail Singh on the outcome. Either the mini committee or the full Assam delegation will meet the Home Minister with the officials of the Home Ministry tomorrow.

The official spokesman did not agree that the talks had broken down, but he disclosed that the agitation leaders did not agree on what the Government representatives said. The Home Secretary Mr H. M. S. Burney and others emphasised to the Assam movement leaders that the definition of the term "foreigners" must be within the parameters of international commitments, national policies and humanitarian considerations.

Since there still remained a wide gulf between the two sides on the term, "foreigners," it is not unlikely that the Home Minister himself would intervene and clear the impasse.

Both leaders of the All Assam Students Union (AASU), and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), candidly admitted that nothing tangible could be evolved. "Our meeting point is zero. We have lost valuable time, Mr Deba Bora of the AASU told newsmen at the Assam House.

Mr Bora asserted that to them it had been clearly indicated that the Government was pushing them back to the streets — to Satyagraha and picketing.

The senior functionary of the AAGSP, Mr Bibaran Bora said that "the talks have come to an end". He said that this was because an alternative formula could not emerge. He hinted that after the meeting of the AASU-AAGSP executive tonight they would reveal further details tomorrow.

The spokesmen of the AAGSP asserted that if the Government

had to honour "policy instruction" there could not be a solution and they regretted that the Government had not come a step forward.

The AAGSP spokesmen told newsmen that dispersal of 'foreigners' between 1961 to other parts of India did not violate either national policies or the policy instructions since they were no longer insisting on deportation of these people.

The draft that AASU-AAGSP have submitted to the Government on the detection of 'foreigners' reiterates that the 1951 NRC and the electoral rolls should be the basis. While all entrants between 1951-61 should be regularised after detection, according to the relevant laws of the land, acceptance of these people was on condition that all those of the decade of 1961-71 be dispersed.

UNI adds: AASU and AAGSP leaders in fact told the officials that no useful purpose would be served by their meeting Mr Zail Singh if the Government would not budge from its stand on the question of refugees.

'SEA OF LIES'
AASU vice-president Nurul Husain issued a strongly worded statement saying the Government's rigid stand had left them with no alternative but to go back to the streets — on the path of satyagraha and picketing.

He said the Government 'is floating on a sea of lies' (while dealing with the question of foreigners) which no one should tolerate.

Mr Husain declared that 'since we must strive, we will fight to the last drop of our blood'.

Mr R. K. Mahanta, president of AAGSP said the Gauhati delegation will decide tonight on the next course.

Indications are that the Gauhati delegation may not go back unless they have no hope of intervention by the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, who has said she is taking personal interest although not sitting in the talks.

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