

# Assam talks to be resumed at Gauhati soon

Hindustan Times Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Dec. 1—Talks between the Union Government officials and the leaders of the Assam agitation on the foreigners' issue, which has defied solution, are expected to be resumed shortly at Gauhati.

In response to repeated invitations by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), Union Home Secretary T. N. Chaturvedi is visiting Assam for further discussions on their demands.

The Centre is taking a fresh initiative in the matter after having brought home to the agitation leaders that negotiation, and not direct action, is the only way to solve the vexed issue. Despite adequate preparations, the AASU and the AAGSP did not succeed in completely paralysing normal life in the State yesterday.

Even before the last round of talks held here was adjourned, the Cabinet Secretary and the Home Secretary had made it clear to the agitation leaders that formal talks could not take place outside Delhi because they had to keep in touch with the Government and obtain instructions on the points that might arise during such talks. That still remains the position.

However, the Home Secretary is being asked to visit Assam for an on-the-spot study of the law and order and the political situation in the wake of the "Rasta Roko" agitation. Union Industry Minister N. D. Tewari has already been deputed by the Prime Minister to assess the Congress-I's chances of forming a stable Ministry based on majority support in the Assembly.

The Central officials discovered during the previous rounds of talks with the Assam leaders that although they agreed to certain formulations, they were unable to commit themselves to a final stand without consulting their respective Executive Committees at Gauhati.

Repeated pleas that they should come armed with powers to negotiate were of no avail. The AASU and AAGSP leaders could come to no agreement but they kept repeating the formula proposed by their parent bodies, which was their brief.

During these talks the agitation leaders tacitly admitted that they were unable to persuade their respective Executive Committees about the soundness of the Government's proposals. It was, therefore, open to the Cabinet Secretary and the Home Secretary to meet the leaders of the two organisations at Gauhati and discuss the matter threadbare with them.

This is what precisely the Home Secretary is expected to do at Gauhati in response to the second invitation of the AASU and the AAGSP leaders. Their invitation itself was in reply to Mr Chaturvedi's invitation for talks in Delhi on Nov 19 or any date convenient to both sides.

Besides the leaders of these two organisations, Mr Chaturvedi may

also hold talks with the leaders of other bodies on this question of steps to resolve the tangle and also to prevent future infiltration. This may also help the AASU and the AAGSP negotiating team in clarifying their thinking on this subject.

The Centre has clearly demonstrated that it will not permit the agitators to hold the State to ransom, as they did for over a year, and that it will ensure uninterrupted working of Central Government installations including the refineries and also the Railways. But continued show of force on such a massive scale is not considered desirable from the long-term point of view.

The feeling here is that yesterday's experience might have convinced the agitators about the Centre's determination to preserve law and order at all costs.

At the same time, it is felt that restoration of popular rule may also help in the process of evolving a solution because at the moment, no political party is taking any interest in the matter. The Centre is in direct confrontation with the agitators and the political parties have no role to play. In case a Ministry is installed soon, it may help the Centre to mobilise public opinion and to persuade the agitators to be reasonable and help resolve the remaining points of difference, which are hindering a final settlement.

Port and dock workers of the Madras port will get a month's wages, subject to a maximum of Rs 750, as "centenary bonus" Mr V. Selvaraj, chairman of the Madras Port Trust, has announced.

## Opposition claim in Assam fails

GAUHATI, Dec. 1 (UNI)—Assam Governor Prakash Mehrotra is understood to have rejected the claim of the alliance of 10 non-Congress-I Left and Democratic Legislature Parties to form a Ministry in the State following the withdrawal of support to the alliance by some members.

Sources close to the leader of the alliance, Mr Sarat Chandra Sinha, confirmed that the Governor today in a communication to the leader said that two members—Mr Manik Das and Mr Darani Das—of the Assam Janata Dal had withdrawn their support to the alliance. The Governor had received two letters from the members in this connection, the communication said.

The alliance had submitted a list of 63 members to the Governor.

Meanwhile, Union Industry Minister N. D. Tiwari, now camping here since Sunday as an emissary of the Congress-I High Command met the ACP-I members to assess the possibility of forming a popular Ministry in the State.

PTI adds:

Mr Sarat Chandra Sinha, leader of the Left and Democratic Alliance, today reiterated that the alliance commanded "absolute majority" in the 119-member (effective) Assembly.

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