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Expansion of Assam Ministry in the offing

From Our Staff Correspondent

GAUHATI, MAY 4.—Though nobody claims to know the Chief Minister's mind, a strong rumour is current in political circles here that a further expansion of the council of ministers in Assam is in the offing.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Golap Borbora, who is known to be keen on providing for representation on his ministry to all ethnic and linguistic groups as well as all caste and class interests, has already a cabinet of 12 members, besides four ministers of state and as many parliamentary secretaries.

Yet, some circles appear to grumble that their communities have not been given 'due representation.' Similarly, there are a few MLAs who joined the Janata Party either on the eve of the last assembly poll or immediately thereafter and now find that they have not been rewarded.

Such demands and pressures are being brought to bear upon Mr. Borbora ever since he ascended the chief Ministerial pedestal in the earlier part of last March. However, to accommodate some of the aspirants, he made subsequent additions to the ministry and also created the posts of four parliamentary secretaries. But now it appears that some sections of the people have still remained unrepresented, while it is also contended that certain districts or groups have been 'over-represented.'

Returned to the state assembly on Congress tickets, two MLAs, belonging to the community of tea labourers, joined the Janata Legislature Party in March. It is understood that they have been expecting to get suitable positions in the JLP, which includes the ministerial team. At present, the tea labour community is represent-

ed in the government by a solitary parliamentary secretary.

Notably, the addition of these two members gave the JLP the much-needed absolute majority in a house of 126 and, incidentally, also rid the state's ruling party of its uncomfortable dependence on voluntary allies like the CPI(M) and the RCPI. Its alliance with the self-abnegating PTCA, forged on the eve of the assembly poll, however, stands on more solid and sure grounds.

The district of Cachar, it is widely acknowledged, is adequately represented, having two members (Mr. Jagannath Singh and Mr. Abul Fazl Golam Osmani) in the cabinet and one (Mr. Lilamoy Das)—belonging to the scheduled castes—as a minister of state. While nobody seems to have any grouse over it, the Bengalees and the scheduled castes people in the

Brahmaputra Valley, nonetheless, feel that their cases have gone by default.

The demand for inclusion of at least one scheduled caste member in the cabinet, apart from Mr. Lilamoy Das, was made before the Chief Minister during the ministry-making month of March itself. On the other hand, some Bengali leaders of the Brahmaputra Valley pleaded their case with the Chief Minister last month, before the latter went to New Delhi.

It is claimed that Mr. Borbora had assured the deputations that he would consult the central leaders of the party and take a decision about expanding the ministry on his return. Back from New Delhi on April 25, the Chief Minister, however, went on a two-day sojourn to Cachar and is now at Dispur.