

ASSAM CM TO FACE CONFIDENCE VOTE

Our Staff Correspondent

GAUHATI, March 22.

THE countdown for Assam
Chief Minister Golap Bor-
bora seems to have begun. Of

the six members elected to the
State Council of Janata Party
from the Janata Legislature
Party on Tuesday night, four are
dissidents. Only two are Mr Bor-
bora's supporters.

This is a clear indication of
the shape of things to come
should the Chief Minister be
forced by the Centre for a confi-
dence vote. Another ominous
sign for Mr Borbora is that in
the State Council elections from
the districts, the majority of the
members returned are opposed
to Mr Borbora.

Dissidents appear confident that
Mr Borbora will be asked to seek
a confidence vote even before
the Budget session of the State
Assembly ends on 7 April.

About the same time, a senior
Minister may resign from the
the Cabinet on the corruption
issue to force the pace of events.
The number's game is already
on and each side is claiming a
"slender majority" for itself in
the event of a showdown.

Though there is no unanimity
yet in the dissident camp on the
choice of Mr Borbora's successor,
the majority may eventually sup-
port Finance Minister Keshab
Gogoi whose image as a man of
integrity remains untarnished.

A notable feature of the fac-
tionalism with the JLP is that
old party loyalties of former
constituents have broken down.
Mr Borbora is being supported
by a section of former socialists,
a few CFD men and some others
who joined the Janata Party
directly and had not belonged to
any other party previously.

On the other hand, the dissi-
dents are a large chunk of form-
er socialists, Congressmen and
CFD with relatively weak Jana
Sangh thrown into the bargain
for good measure.

Meanwhile, considerable inter-
est has been aroused by the pre-
sence here US Ambassador Ro-
bert Goheen who has come on
a "private visit". At an informal
get together with some select
journalists on Monday, the Am-
bassador is reported to have
made discreet inquiries about
Union Minister of State for Edu-
cation Renuka Devi Barkataki's
popularity in the Party and State
and about the strength of the
Assam Janata Party itself. Mr
Goheen made a "courtesy call"
on Mr Borbora on Tuesday morn-
ing.

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