

Political dynamics of upcoming Legislative Assembly Election, 2026 in Assam: A critical review.

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Abstract:

The assembly election of Assam is to be held on March-April, 2026. The political parties including ruling BJP alliance (AGP) is initiating different strategies to each out the voters and different plans and programmes has been set up. Amidst this, there are certain determining factors or determinants which are emerged as deciding factors especially in Assam. Hence this paper is intended to analyse the special issues which can affect the support base of the voters of Assam during election. In analysing the issues, some general issues are also covered in this paper but more stress is given to the special one. In fact, the contending political parties of Assam should consider the factors seriously if they want to win the election and form the government. These issues are influx, unemployment, Community-base sub-nationalism, demand for ST status, Ethnicity, regional sentiment, NPS and OPS issue, young voters and price hike etc. Thus, this is an empirical study applied the analytical method of study with relevant data for the topic.

Key Words: Assembly Election, Influx, unemployment, sub-nationalism, ethnicity.

Introduction:

Assembly election of Assam is likely to be held in March-April, 2026. The present BJP-led alliance government will complete their 2nd term and making all endeavours to regain power. As like BJP and its allies, the opposition party like Congress (I), Rajoor Dal (RD), Axom Jatiyo Parishad (AJP), AIUDF, BPPL, BPF, TMC and other smaller or state level political parties are also started all possible efforts to convince the electorates to pursue their support to them. The present BJP led government has undertaken different means to enhance the support of the electors by their policies and programmes. Furthermore, the government has made some

process to attract the Hindu majority voters by polarizing the people into Hindus and Muslims. By eviction of government lands illegally occupied by Muslims, Mughal term card, encouraging the Hindu organisations to evict the illegal Bangladeshi migrants from upper Assam districts etc. are some of the strategies to exemplify that the party is pro-Hindu and pro-Assamese people. However, the social assistance programmes of the central government as well as state sponsored programmes are extensively utilized to ensure BJP party's support in the ensuing election. At the same trajectory, the Congress (I) and other regional parties are also initiating different strategies to fascinate the voters. As sitting in opposition bench in the Assam Assembly, they are mostly using good image of Mr. Gourav Gogoi, Akhil Gogoi and Lurinjyoti Gogoi to encourage the voter to vote in favour of their party. Further, they are also trying to utilize the anti-incumbency factors and visualize to show the ambiguities of the ruling BJP-led government.

The traditional methods of membership drive campaign, regular meetings of the party workers, use of social media platforms for spreading the party manifesto and showing the drawbacks of the opposition parties, harsh criticism against each other, use of hoardings and newspaper advertisements etc. are used by all parties as a technique of manipulation of voters. Beyond all the manipulation techniques, there are other determinants which are very significant in achieving the success in the upcoming 2026 state assembly election. Thus, this paper is intended to discuss the determinants in the political dynamics of Assam and 2026 Assam Assembly election.

Objective of the study:

1. To discuss the relevant determinants to be taken care of by the contesting political parties of Assam.
2. To elaborate the special determinants of different political parties in case of Assam political landscape.

Research Questions:

1. What are relevant determinants to be taken by the political parties to win the confidence from the electors?
2. What are the special determinants to be considered by the political parties especially present in Assam political landscape?

Research Methodology:

This is an empirical study of the political dynamics of Assam relating to upcoming Assembly election 2026, hence analytical method of study is being applied to understand the determinants which influences the basic support mechanism of the electors. The secondary sources of materials have been the sources of data is being collected from different printed books, print and online journals, internet sources and websites. The collected data is critically analyzed to justify the arguments positively by maintaining neutrality and authenticity.

1. Discussion:

The determining factors influencing the voting behaviour of the electors could be divided into general determinants and special determinants. The general determinants are present in all states and prevalent in all elections. They may be categorized into caste, gender, religion, illiteracy, language, charisma of leaders, financial stability, issues of development, unemployment, underemployment and employment, public policy, performance of the party, election campaign, party factionalism, and public esteem of the candidates. However, the special determinants vary from state to state, but there are certain specific conditions in Assam that are very significant in capitalizing the voting behaviour of the electors. The significant factors include illegal immigration of Bangladeshis, identity questions, price hikes of essential commodities, the demand for ST status, sub-nationalism within greater Assamese nationalism, and unemployment. In the preceding parts the general determinants are simply discussed to inform the readers about the existing scenario of Assam, which will determine the voting behaviour of the electors. However, the special determinants section analysed the intensity of the issues that are particularly relevant to the Assam Assembly election in 2026.

1.1 Caste: Caste played a predominant role in Indian politics. It remains a significant and complex factor in politics, which is influencing everything from electoral strategies and voter behaviour to policy formulation. Its impacts have been seen in the electoral mobilization, candidate selection, political alliances, policy making, reservation, etc.

As per government reports, there are more than 206 castes in Assam, including many sub-castes. The Government of Assam has defined these castes in 7 categories as Schedule Tribe (plain), Schedule Tribe (Hills), Schedule Caste (SC), Other Backward Caste/Class (OBC)/More Other Backward Caste/Class (MOBC), Hill Tribes in plains, Hill Tribes in Hills, and General.

As mentioned in the table-1 below that the schedule caste and schedule tribes population are available in almost all districts and therefore, the political parties should anticipate with this fact and planned to capture their support in elections. If they are majority in a particular district then the political parties should undertake special steps to attract them. However, as caste the OBC population list is unavailable in concrete data, so the political parties should also collect the data and make appropriate step to cover them to earn their support. In fact, the majority OBC populations are living in upper Assam districts like Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Golaghat and Jorhat, hence a separate strategy should be taken by the political parties to capitalise their support.

Table: 1: District-wise population of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes in Assam, census 2011

District	Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
	Total	Female	Sex Ratio	Total	Female	Sex Ratio
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kokrajhar	29570	14184	922	278665	139086	996
Dhubri	62628	30266	935	2300	1156	1010
Goalpara	45094	22095	961	231570	115557	996
Barpeta	95320	46155	939	27344	13814	1021

Morigaon	117841	57647	958	136777	68395	1000
Nagaon	156913	77258	970	86422	43303	1004
Sonitpur	65367	31893	953	139033	68698	977
Lakhimpur	81840	40151	963	249426	122710	968
Dhemaji	44225	21219	922	325560	160111	968
Tinsukia	37688	18245	938	82066	40297	965
Dibrugarh	58876	28359	929	102871	51036	985
Sivasagar	34847	17094	963	37334	18235	955
Jorhat	64787	31856	967	62368	30901	982
Golaghat	62298	30491	959	111765	55345	981
Karbi Anglong	33523	16021	915	345220	170663	978
Dima Hasao	4337	1997	853	151843	75323	984
Cachar	264897	128846	947	17569	8833	1011
Karimganj	157890	76506	940	1940	946	952
Hailakandi	70659	34290	943	691	337	952
Bongaigaon	82784	40271	947	18835	9458	1009
Chirang	35135	17030	941	178688	89415	1002
Kamrup	107827	52590	952	182038	89944	977
Kamrup Metro	101789	49683	953	75121	37219	982
Nalbari	60216	29562	964	23364	11672	998
Baksa	73083	35549	947	331007	165373	998
Darrang	40260	19694	958	8419	4119	958
Udalguri	37844	18442	951	267372	133822	1002
Biswanath	43763	21420	959	93174	45824	968
Charaideo	7500	3685	966	11705	5815	987
Hojai	109437	52619	926	28731	14091	963
Majuli	23878	11615	947	77603	38275	973
South Salmara	7767	3770	943	4032	1978	963
West K. Anglong	11438	5504	928	193518	95615	977
Assam	2231321	1086007	948	3884371	1927366	985

1.2 Gender: In the electoral process, gender plays a predominant role. In the last three to four elections, the women's participation has been tremendous, and the rate of participation in the election has also become high. As per the CEO's Assam report, in the 2021 election, out of 79.93% of voters, the turnout for females was 76.07% and for males, 75.79%. Hence, it seems that female voter turnout is higher than male voter turnout. Thus, the contesting political parties should take adequate initiatives to attract the female voter to decide their fate in the ensuing election.¹

1.3 Religion: Although India is a constitutionally secular state, religion remains a highly significant factor in politics. Its influences might be witnessed in electoral strategies, social policies, and identity-based mobilizations. While the law prohibits appearing for votes on religious grounds, political parties often use religious rhetoric, symbols, and issues to appeal to voters. The rise of Hindu nationalist politics has particularly intensified this interplay, raising concerns about the nation's secular fabric.²

Religion wise population of Assam according to 2011 census is given as under

Table-2: Assam Religion Wise Population

Religion	Count	Percentage
Hindu	1,91,80,759	61.47%
Muslim	1,06,79,345	34.22%
Christian	11,65,867	3.74%
Buddhist	54,993	0.18%
Religion not stated	50,873	0.16%
Other religions and persuasions	27,118	0.09%
Jain	25,949	0.08%
Sikh	20,672	0.07%

Based on Data from Census 2011

Thus, the political parties of Assam should consider the religion as determining factors to win the election and form the government.

1.4 Illiteracy: Illiteracy is one of the determinants in the electoral process of any election. According to the census report, the 2011 total population of Assam is 3.12 crore, where 72.19 are literate, out of which male literacy is 77.85% and female literacy is 66.27%. However, in comparison to the average literacy rate of India (72.98%), Assam's literacy rate is low. It is observed that 27.81% of people are still illiterate in Assam.³ While these large sections of people are going to cast their vote, they are not sure about whom to vote for and who would be the best candidates. Further, they might be manipulated very easily by the political parties on the basis of caste, religion, creed, etc. Thus, the contending political parties should take care of it while seeking votes from the electors.

1.5 Charisma: Charismatic leadership is another important determinant in the electoral process in all societies and nations. It means exceptional quality of a factor and overrides the group elements leader that becomes a source of attraction and reverence for the people in large numbers in an opposite sense. It also means a source of fear to many people because they do not speak or dare to speak against the wishes of a powerful leader. Some leaders of the political parties have emerged who are characteristically influential by their personalities. Here, personality cults play a predominant role among the people of a state or society. That is literally termed as charisma. In our country Nehru, Indira, Vajpayee, Modi are some example of personalities which influences have been witnessed in different periods of time. The charismatic leadership in rule and operating the state administration in Assam is numerically less. Immediately after the independence, Chief Ministers like Gopinath Bordoloi, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Sarat Chandra Singha, Hiteswar Saikia, and Torun Gogoi from the Congress party; Dr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta of AGP; and Sarbananda Sonowal and Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma of BJP are some examples of charismatic leadership in Assam⁴. The Gaurav Gogoi the state president of Congress party of Assam is also belonging to the charisma group of leaders

in Assam. Thus, in the present situation what kind of charisma of Dr. H.B. Sarma and Gaurov Gogoi become effective in the assembly election will be observed in the next election, 2026.

1.6 Language: Language is also another determinant in influencing the voting behaviour of the people. In Assam, Assamese is the official state language, but there are 55 spoken languages, with Bodo as an associate official language. However, Bengali is the official language in Barak Valley. The indigenous communities, like Mising, Karbi, Rabha, and Dimasa, used their tribal languages.

Table 3: Language wise distribution of population of Assam

SL	Languages	Population	Percentage
1	Assamese	1,46,09,227	46.82
2	Bengali	87,86,827	28.16
3	Bodo/Boro	14,07,711	4.51
4	Hindi	10,01,993	3.21
5	Others	8,13,436	2.61
6	Sadan/Sadri	7,15,180	2.29
7	Miri/Mishing	6,19,197	1.98
8	Nepali	5,96,188	1.91
9	Karbi/Mikir	5,11,732	1.64
10	Bhojpuri	2,78,052	0.89
11	Odia	2,17,305	0.70
12	Santali	2,08,337	0.67
13	Rajbangsi	1,91,438	0.61
14	Garo	1,70,677	0.55
15	Manipuri	1,68,127	0.54

As per the table (Table 3) shown above reflects that majority of people speak Assamese (46.82%) and second is Bengali (28.16%). All other languages are spoken by less than 5% inhabitants of Assam as shown in the table. Thus, the political parties should target the Assamese and Bengali speakers' people because they are dominating the other languages. Although the other language speakers are less than 5% but the support of them could not be ignored and considered insignificants by the political parties at all.⁵

1.7 Financial stability: Another important determinant of the electoral politics of Assam is the question of financial stability. The state is rich in mineral, coal, and forest resources. Under mineral resources, coal, petroleum, and natural gas exist in Assam. However, Assam is a land of hills and forests, and in the hills and forests, trees, fruits, fuel, fodder, medicinal herbs, agar oil, bamboo, and cane are major ones, while animals like tigers, elephants, deer, and rhinos are available. The Kaziranga and Manas National Parks are the tourist attractions of the world. In agriculture resources, jute and tea are primary resources and famous in the world. The Brahmaputra and its tributaries are the water resources. The Kapili Hydroelectric Project fulfils the electricity demand of Assam. As per the report of the Advantage Assam 2.0, 2025 different trust areas of investment, industry start-up, and entrepreneurship have been selected, e.g., Petroleum- and natural gas-based industries, Industries based on locally available minerals, processing of plantation crops, food processing industries, agri-horticulture products, herbal

products, biotech products, pharmaceuticals, chemical and plastic-based industries, export-oriented industries, electronic and IT-based industries including the services sector, textiles and sericulture, engineering industries, cane and bamboo-based industries, and other handicrafts industries. More importantly, Assam is famous for *Muga* silk, biodiversity, and wildlife tourism.⁶ Thus, the electors in particular and people in general expect financial stability and growth and development of economy of the state. The voters while considering the political parties, observes the manifesto or agenda of the political parties and deliver their support them which will ensure the financial stability of the state.

1.8 Development issue: Development is a major issue for political parties during election campaigns. The electors in particular and people in general considered development an important issue while casting their votes for a political party. The Congress party, which was in power for the last 50 years, had made some remarkable progress in the development of industry, roads and communication, education, employment, etc. Hence, the party is trying to visualize them in their election campaign. The Janata Party, which was in power for only one year, had not made any remarkable change. The AGP was in power for almost two terms, i.e., 10 years, but failed to address the development issue in Assam. The BJP, which was in power from 2016 to 2026, had made certain significant endeavours to enlighten economic growth and overall development in the state. Thus, the political parties which seek public support in ensuing election need to give proper attention on the development goals and prospects of Assam.

1.9 Employment-related issue: India is a country of youths, and there are more young voters than in other countries of the world. These young voters are playing a vital role in giving an opportunity to become the majority in the parliament or state assemblies. They are very vibrant and conscious about the rights and liberties. These youths want employment, and employment is the primary concern of these young voters. The party that assures employment to the youth wins the race. The youth want that the selection procedure for jobs should be free from corruption, malpractice, and favouritism. So far as Assam is concerned, the young voters are more, and they seek judicious employment opportunities rather than corrupt-based employment. Hence, the political parties should understand the density of this issue and take appropriate steps to provide general employment to the youths.

1.10 Government policies: The political parties in power are making public policies that will try to address the problems faced by the residents in their day-to-day life. The party either in power or in opposition should frame such policies, which are to be citizen-friendly and problem-solving. The electors are expected to undertake such policies, which will solve the socio-economic and political problems of Assam. The political parties that understand the gesture of the people and promise to fulfil it when they form the government after the election win the confidence of the people.

1.11 Performance of the party in power: The performance in solving or redressing the pertinent issues of the people during the rule of the party in power becomes favourable to the people in the elections. On the basis of the performance, the electors reconsidered the party and gave another opportunity to reign. But in reverse conditions, the electors rejected that party and elected other parties. In Assam, the Congress ruled for more than 40 years, but the last 15 years of rule under Torun Gogoi's Chief Ministership (2001-2015) became tiresome, and mental irritation arose due to his slang languages delivered at different times.

1.12 Election campaign: Election campaign is another determining factor in any election. The political parties of Assam, like those of other states, extensively make plans for election campaigns, like public meetings, hoarding, posters, banners, newspaper coverage, social media campaigns, member drives, etc. etc. On the basis of the same footing, the political parties of Assam are also making similar efforts to disseminate the message to the general voter and attract them.

1.13 Factionalism: Factionalism is a common phenomenon of all political parties. It may be considered either a prayer or a curse for the political parties. During the election environment, the leaders of the political parties are joined to other parties, leaving the parent one for their own personal benefit. In the case of Assam, the leaders frequently change their flag, which is welcomed by the other parties. It became a prey because if a charismatic leader joined the party, then their possibility to win the election would become easy. In contrast to this, the parent party lost a significant leader, which created a problem in the management of their party in a short period of time.

1.14 Public esteem of the candidates: Public esteem of the candidate is another important determinant, which is also associated with the charisma of the leaders. It is observed that if the contesting candidate is very popular among the voters, then his chances of winning are sure, and vice versa. Thus, the political parties inquire about such leaders while providing tickets in a particular constituency during an election.

2. Specific state related determinants:

2.1 Illegal immigrants: Illegal migration to Assam is a contemporary issue that has been prevalent since the 1980s, and the Assam Accord signed in 1985 has also not been able to solve this problem for the last 40 years.⁷ During these periods 7 governments have completed their terms, but still an amicable settlement is a distant dream. The government comes and goes, but no permanent solution arrives at the doorsteps of the Assamese people. All political parties promised to settle it during the election campaign, but they failed to resolve the problem. Instead, the political parties want to keep this problem alive for different reasons. Firstly, this issue gives them an opportunity to include in their election agenda and manipulation techniques to attract the indigenous voters. Secondly, an issue to divide the people on Hindu and Muslim and to show pro-Hindu or pro-Muslim and secular character. Thirdly, a protector of the identity of the ethnic communities of Assam. Hence, the political parties of Assam will also play this card in the ensuing assembly election, 2026.

2.2 Assamese community-based sub-nationalism: Assamese as sub-nationalism is the general determinant, but community-based sub-nationalism is very active in present days. There are 206 communities along with sub-communities in Assam, and these communities felt that their identity was in crisis right now; therefore, they became very conscious and active to protect their identity. In this situation community-based identity becomes more and more imperative for them than greater Assamese identity. This situation became tense when ethnic clashes occurred at different times among them. Thus, the political parties who wish to contest the election should understand the intensity of this issue and should respond to it rationally.

2.3 Demand for ST status of 6 communities: Another important issue for the 2026 election in Assam is the demand raised by 6 communities for conferring Schedule Tribe (ST) status to them. The Tai Ahom, Matak, Chutia, Moran, Tea Tribes, and Konch Rajbanshi are the six

communities, and they are holding majority votes in locations where their population is living. The political parties of Assam responded to this issue in their election campaigns in the last few elections, but still the ST status has not been granted so far. Thus, this issue will become an election agenda for the political parties of Assam.

2.4 Recognizing Ethnic Diversity of Assam: Assam is a state of different ethnic communities. These ethnic communities are maintaining their distinct identities and trying to preserve their culture. The Bodos, Karbi, Dimasa, Hajong, Konch, Mising, etc., are some examples of groups that expect that their distinct culture and history should be protected at any cost and that the political parties should give importance to it.

2.5 Regional sentiments: Beyond the community-based identity, ethnic diversity, and demand for ST status, regional sentiments are also playing a vital role in Assam politics. The Assamese people are always prioritizing Assam as a distinct region, and regional sentiments are showing in all spheres. There were only two times that the Axom Gana Parishad came to power, but they failed to fulfil the aspirations of the people, and hence, they are rejected. But still the party exit and a section of people support them. In addition to this, Rajo Dol and Axom Jatio Parishad are two parties in Assam that are trying to sensitize the people on regionalism and regional sentiment.⁸ Although the BJP and Congress are national parties, pre-election and post-election alliances are still given importance either to continue in power or to capture the power. The present government of Assam is an alliance government, and AGP and BPF are the alliance partners.

2.6 NPS and OPS issue: The insertion of the New Pension Scheme (NPS) for the employees from 2005 on an all-India basis in government departments also creates tensions among the government employees. The government employees of Assam are also in a tense situation and demanded the reinstallation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).⁹ This has also become an issue for the employees, which is to be addressed by the political parties. The non-BJP government of Punjab has already nullified the NPS and installed OPS in the state. This effort of the Punjab government encourages the employees of Assam, and they are also pressuring the political parties to address this issue. Thus, the political parties should also give importance to this issue in the ensuing election of Assam.

2.7 Unemployment: Unemployment is another burning issue of Assam. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey report the employment rate of Assam is 6.1% i.e. young talented youths are unemployed till now. They are mostly educated unemployed people who expect to get a job in government sectors. Thus, the political parties should consider this issue in their election campaign and can assure them to give jobs as per their capabilities.¹⁰

2.8 Young Voters: According to the latest photo electoral roll published on January 18, 2021 in Assam, the young voters fall in the basket of 20-29 where there is a total of 64,29,378 electorates including 32,32,795 males and 31,96,583 females. The ensuing Assam Assembly polls will be conducted as per the Photo Electoral Roll 2021. In the age group of 18-19 years, there are 4,20,792 first-time voters including 2,36,893 males and 1,83,889 females. Of the 56,69,880 electorates in the age group of 30-39 years, there are 28,39,749 male voters and 28,30,131 female voters. In the age group of 40-49 years of the 45,12,065 electorates, there are 22,53,858 males and 22,58,507 females.¹¹

2.9 Price hike of essential commodities: The price hike of essential commodities is also another issue in present times. The political parties of Assam should address this issue during their election campaign and assure the people of supplying essential commodities at a low price if they come to power.

Conclusion:

The assembly election in Assam is expected to be held in March-April 2026, and all political parties, including the ruling BJP and its allies, are applying all strategies to attract the voters. The ruling allies have launched different welfare schemes and are implementing central as well as state schemes covering all categories of people, including women, youth, and old-age people, with cash and kind benefits. The opposition parties are also taking all possible measures to attract the voters of Assam. Hence, there are many determining factors commonly visible in all elections, which are categorized into general determinants. In addition to this, there are certain specific determinants of Assam, which are mostly issue-related, community-concerned, and situation-based. These determinants are primarily specific to particular areas and issues. Hence, whatever the determinants discussed above, the political parties of Assam should consider it to win the confidence of the people and win the ensuing election. The people will consider the political parties, which will give preference to these issues as well as fulfil the expectations of the people. The special determinants are more important than the general because people of Assam are oversensitive to problems like illegal immigration, identity crises, community interest, ethnic interest, ST status, regional sentiments, the old pension scheme, unemployment, and price hikes. Remarkably, while going to cast their vote, the voters will remember these issues and choose either the candidate or political party that will presumably fulfil them in the future.

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End Note:

¹ Census of India, 2011, <https://www.censusdata.in/>

² Ibid

³ https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/assam.html#google_vignette

⁴ Dewri, D. (2025). Electoral politics and voting behaviour of the electors in Assam: A Study of the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha elections since 2011 to 2024, International Journal of Political Science and Governance, 2025, 7(7): 176-180

⁵ <https://assaminfo.com/general-knowledge-assam/426/how-many-languages-are-spoken-in-assam.htm>

⁶ Statistical handbook of Assam 2024

https://des.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/ecostat_mdhassu_in_oid_3/menu/document/statistical_handbook_assam_2024_0.pdf

⁷ Dewri, D. (2025). Electoral politics and voting behaviour of the electors in Assam: A Study of the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha elections since 2011 to 2024, International Journal of Political Science and Governance, 2025, 7(7): 176-180

⁸ <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/once-a-powerhouse-assams-regional-politics-faces-identity-crisis-1503452835.html>

⁹ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/politics/india-pension-controversy-ups-nps-ops-reforms-government-employees/article68639406.ece>

¹⁰ Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) – Monthly Bulletin [April 2025]

¹¹ <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/assam/young-voters-to-play-crucial-role-in-assam-assembly-polls-2021.html>

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