

Urban Chronicles

A Monthly Newsletter

By Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Assam

অসম চৰকাৰ



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Government of Assam

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Botanical Garden at Fancy Bazar

FOREWORD

*From the Desk of the
Commissioner and
Secretary, DoHUA*



I am delighted to present the February edition of Urban Chronicles, our monthly newsletter highlighting our advancements, innovations, and collaborative efforts towards creating sustainable and inclusive urban environments.

This month's key highlights feature the Jagiroad Township Project, which represents a transformative approach to planned urban living, and the Brahmaputra Riverfront redevelopment, a significant public space initiative in Guwahati spearheaded by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA). Additionally, we highlight the impactful IEC campaigns by the Tihu Municipal Board, community-driven efforts by the Digboi Municipal Board, and the remarkable initiatives undertaken by Dhemaji Municipal Board to improve municipal governance and enhance public services. These initiatives reflect our department's commitment to promoting growth, upgrading public infrastructure, ensuring self-sustainability, and providing enhanced services to urban residents.

As we navigate the opportunities and challenges of urban development, this edition reaffirms our commitment to fostering resilient, inclusive citizen-centric cities. I extend my sincere gratitude to all stakeholders, partners, and contributors for their unwavering support in realizing our vision of equitable and vibrant urban ecosystems.

Best regards,

Kavitha Padmanabhan, IAS
Commissioner & Secretary,
Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt of Assam

Initiative of the Month

Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority: Redefining Urban Landscapes with Innovation and Heritage

The Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) oversees planned urban development in Guwahati city. Its key roles include:

- **Urban Planning & Zoning** : Prepares the Master Plan to regulate growth.
- **Infrastructure Development** : Manages roads, drainage, water
- **Building & Land Use** : Approves construction and ensures compliance.
- **Environmental Management** : Handles conservation, waste management, and pollution control.
- **Traffic & Transport** : Improves roads, parking, and public transit.
- **Housing & Slum Development** : Implements housing and renewal projects.
- **Public Amenities** : Develops parks, markets, and recreational spaces.

Over the few years, it has made significant strides in enhancing public infrastructure, from redevelopment of riverfronts, parks, urban planning initiatives . Among these interventions, the **Jagiroad Township project and revitalizing the Brahmaputra Riverfront** stands out as a landmark achievement, marking a significant leap forward in the region's development.

Jagiroad Township : Pioneering the Future of Sustainable Urban Development

As Guwahati, the vibrant heart of Northeast India, navigates the challenges of rapid urbanization—overpopulation, strained infrastructure, and environmental concerns—a promising solution is emerging in Jagiroad. This growing town is poised to become a beacon of balanced development, offering a fresh perspective on sustainable urban growth in the region. Spearheaded by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) under the Department of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of Assam,

the Integrated Satellite Township at Jagiroad is set to redefine urban living.

This visionary project is a testament to the G-20 Principles on Financing Cities of Tomorrow, championing sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. Envisioned as a self-reliant urban ecosystem, Jagiroad will boast state-of-the-art infrastructure, thriving industrial zones, and expansive green spaces, creating a harmonious blend of progress and nature.

At the heart of this transformation lies the Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Facility (TSAT), a monumental INR 27,000 crore investment poised to generate over 27,000 jobs. This groundbreaking initiative will position Jagiroad as a global semiconductor powerhouse, attracting talent and innovation from across the world.

Additionally, a cluster of downstream industries supporting the semiconductor plant is planned within the upcoming Assam Electronics & Semiconductor Logistic Park (AESLP) at Jagiroad. Covering 256 hectares in Phase-0 including TSAT, AESLP will play a pivotal role in strengthening the region's industrial landscape.

Spanning 47 square kilometres, the township will be developed in phases, with Phase 1 designed to accommodate a population of 2 lakhs and generate 92,000 employment opportunities.

AESLP is envisioned as a fully integrated ecosystem supporting the semiconductor industry and its associated sectors. The township will be equipped with comprehensive facilities, including:

- **Downstream Industries** : To support the semiconductor ecosystem.
- **Residential Accommodation** : Housing for staff and officers.
- **Social Infrastructure** : Schools and hospitals for the community.
- **Commercial & Hospitality Facilities** : Hotels, a MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) center, and a skill development center.
- **Essential Services** : Fire station, electric substation, and water treatment plant.
- **Banking & Trade Facilitation** : A logistics center, banking services, and an excise office to streamline trade operations.

- **Recreational & Commercial Zones :** A stadium, market, commercial district, petrol pump, CNG station, and LPG outlet.
- **Environmental & Waste Management Facilities :** An electronic waste handling facility.
- **Green Spaces & Leisure Areas :** Landscaped gardens, a golf course, and a water body for ecological balance.

Strategically located and seamlessly connected, Jagiroad is not just a township but a blueprint for the cities of tomorrow. With its robust infrastructure, industrial potential, and commitment to sustainability, Jagiroad offers investors and stakeholders a golden opportunity to be part of a transformative urban revolution.

Reviving the Brahmaputra: Guwahati's Riverfront Reimagined

Guwahati's Brahmaputra Riverfront is undergoing a remarkable transformation, blending heritage with modernity. Led by the Government of Assam and the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), the project stretches from the Mahabahu Brahmaputra River Heritage Centre (MBRHC) to the Guwahati Ropeway's south bank terminal, creating a seamless mix of nature, culture, and urban design.

The first phase, completed at a cost of ₹58 crore, introduced landscaped spaces, stabilized riverbanks, and public areas like nature trails and viewing decks. The historic Padum Pukhuri pond was revitalized,

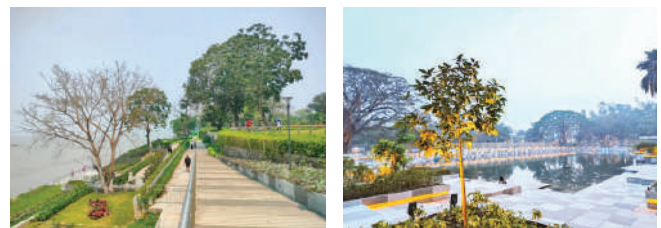
adding to the area's charm. Inaugurated in January 2024, this pedestrian-friendly stretch celebrates Guwahati's heritage while embracing modern infrastructure.

The next phase, with an estimated cost of ₹34 crore, will feature a multi-cuisine food court, a children's play area, a martyr column, and lush green spaces. This expansion aims to deepen the city's connection with its riverine beauty, creating a dynamic hub for recreation and culture.

As the Brahmaputra Riverfront evolves, it reflects Guwahati's growth—honoring its past while stepping boldly into the future.



Illustrative plan of the Brahmaputra Riverfront Development Initiative



Walkway in the Brahmaputra Riverfront

Buzz from the ULBs

Transforming Tihu's approach to Swacchata through IEC Programs

The Tihu Municipal Board has successfully implemented a series of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) programs, revolutionizing the town's approach to Swacchata. These initiatives have not only raised awareness but also inspired community participation, leading to a cleaner and more sustainable Tihu.

KEY IEC INITIATIVES:

- **Wall Painting:** A vibrant wall painting on the Tihu Municipal Board office building showcases the importance of cleanliness and proper waste management.

- **Waste to Wonder Park:** This innovative park, created from plastic waste, serves as a unique platform to educate citizens about plastic waste management and recyclability.
- **Awareness Programs:** Interactive sessions in schools and religious places have encouraged community involvement, particularly among women, promoting jan bhagidari (public participation).

IMPACT:

These IEC programs have led to a significant increase in public participation, with citizens taking ownership

of cleanliness initiatives. The impact is clear—a cleaner Tihu with enhanced waste management. As Tihu continues to strive for Swachhata, these IEC initiatives will remain a crucial component of its sustainability journey.



Wall painting at Tihu M.B showcasing importance of waste management



Waste to wonder Park by Tihu Municipal Board



IEC campaigns in action: cleaner spaces, stronger communities.

COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Students and Citizens Unite for a Cleaner, Greener Digboi

In an inspiring community effort, the Digboi Municipal Board (MB) teamed up with 21 NSS students to spearhead an awareness campaign in the Digboi Charali area and daily market. The students engaged with local shop owners, emphasizing the importance of using segregated dustbins and discouraging practices like open littering and roadside garbage disposal. They also shed light on the serious health and environmental impacts of improper waste management.

To reinforce the message, Digboi MB issued notices to commercial establishments, giving them seven days to comply with cleanliness guidelines. Adding a creative touch, a two-day door-to-door campaign is underway, urging businesses to adopt the practice of maintaining two dustbins for effective waste segregation.

This initiative showcases the power of collective action in building a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable Digboi. By uniting citizens, students, and local authorities, the town is taking meaningful steps toward a greener future.



Awareness drive in Digboi town by students of NSS

Stories from the First Mile

Sanjha Mela: Empowering Guwahati's Urban Poor

The Sanjha Mela, hosted by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM), marked a significant milestone in empowering the urban poor in Guwahati. Held from 26-30th December, 2024, at Sonaram High School Ground, Bharalumukh, the event provided SHGs and PM SVANidhi beneficiaries a platform to showcase their entrepreneurial skills and connecting them directly to customers, offering a diverse range of products, including traditional pitha, laru, and other food items, alongside unique handicrafts.

The event achieved three critical objectives:

- **Market Access:** Empowering SHGs to bypass intermediaries and engage directly with consumers.
- **Economic Growth:** Boosting income opportunities through direct customer interactions.

- **Digital Literacy:** Encouraging cashless transactions for modernized business practices.

Beyond economic empowerment, cultural programs fostered community spirit and provided entertainment for SHG families and visitors. Mayor Saraniya lauded the initiative, emphasizing its role in enabling self-reliance and enhancing livelihoods.

The Sanjha Mela exemplifies GMC's and DAY-NULM's dedication to socio-economic upliftment, offering urban communities the tools for sustainable growth and independence.



Stills from Sanjha Mela



SHG Stalls at Sanjha Mela, Guwahati

Urban Lexicon:

Emerging Terminologies in shaping urban life

MUNIS

Fueling Urban Growth, One Bond at a Time

Municipal bonds, or "munis," are debt securities issued by state and local governments to fund public projects like schools, highways, and bridges. These bonds offer an alternative to government grants, enhancing financial autonomy for cities while providing investors with tax-exempt, low-risk returns. In India, regulatory frameworks by SEBI and RBI ensure transparency and investor protection, making municipal bonds a key tool for sustainable urban development.

Key Features

- **Tax Advantages:** Interest earned is often exempt from federal, state, and local taxes.
- **Low Risk:** Backed by government entities, these bonds are considered safe investments.
- **Social Impact:** Funds contribute to critical infrastructure, benefiting communities.

Types of Municipal Bonds:

- **General Obligation Bonds (GO):** Secured by the government's taxing power.

- **Revenue Bonds:** Supported by income from specific projects like toll roads or utilities.

Success Stories in India:

Cities like Pune, Hyderabad, and Indore have successfully raised crores through municipal bonds. Pune's ₹200 crore issuance in 2017 paved the way for others, funding water supply systems and sewage treatment plants.

Programs like the Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT, along with SEBI's simplified regulations, are driving this trend. Municipal bonds are emerging as a powerful mechanism for building self-sufficient, resilient cities, blending financial innovation with urban growth.



Envisioning Urban: India and Beyond

Union Budget 2025 Aims to Transform Urban Cities with ₹1 Lakh Crore Challenge Fund

In the Union Budget 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a dedicated loan scheme and an urban fund for street vendors to support the informal sector. The loan scheme offers affordable credit to help vendors expand businesses, purchase equipment, and manage working capital, building on the success of the PM SVANidhi scheme. The urban fund will improve infrastructure by developing vending zones, sanitation facilities, and access to clean water and electricity. These measures aim to enhance working conditions, beautify urban spaces, and promote inclusive growth, empowering street vendors to become self-reliant. Detailed guidelines will be released soon. (Source: *The Indian Express*)

Paris as a 15-Minute City : A Blueprint for Urban Transformation

Paris has become a global model for sustainable urban living by adopting the 15-minute city concept, where residents can access work, schools, healthcare, and leisure within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. Key initiatives include:

- **Revitalized Public Spaces:** Pedestrian-friendly streets, bike lanes, and green areas.
- **Decentralized Services:** Schools, clinics, and markets strategically placed for accessibility.
- **Sustainable Mobility:** Investments in cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles.
- **Local Economy Boost:** Support for small businesses to reduce long commutes.

This transformation has reduced traffic, lowered emissions, and strengthened communities, proving that prioritizing people over cars creates a livable, sustainable future.

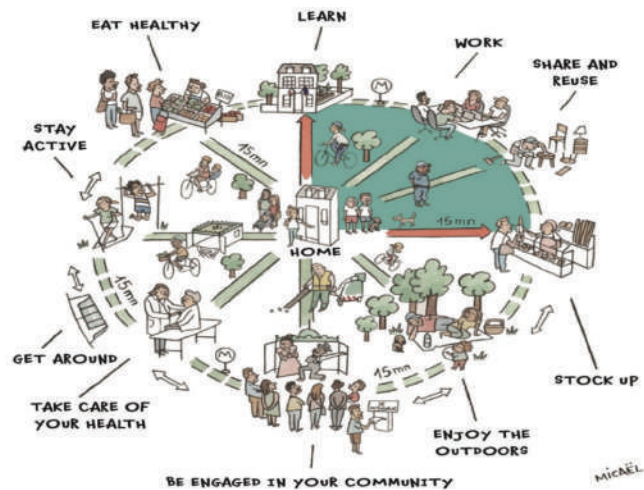
15-Minute City: Relevance for Small Towns in Assam

The 15-Minute City model fosters self-sufficient, sustainable communities in Assam's small towns by:

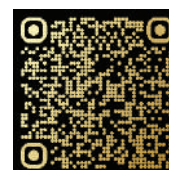
- **Reducing Dependence on Cities:** Strengthening local healthcare, education, and jobs to curb migration.
- **Boosting Local Economy:** Encouraging local markets and small industries for employment and self-reliance.
- **Promoting Green Growth:** Utilizing available land for walkable, eco-friendly neighborhoods.

- **Improving Mobility:** Enhancing public transport, cycling, and pedestrian infrastructure.
- **Enhancing Disaster Resilience:** Ensuring essential services remain accessible during floods and emergencies.

This model reduces urban migration, improves quality of life, and ensures sustainable growth in Assam's small towns.



Illustrative image of a 15 minute city (image credit : World Economic Forum)



For the full story, scan the QR code below

Revolving EDITOR'S DESK

Feature of the Month



Ashima Hazarika
Executive Officer, Dhemaji Municipal Board

Dhemaji Municipal Board leads the Way:

PIONEERING SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

Nestled in the scenic expanse of Assam, Dhemaji is a vibrant town known for its cultural heritage, natural beauty, and resilient spirit. Surrounded by lush greenery and intersected by rivers, the town serves as a vital hub for the region. At the heart of Dhemaji's development efforts lies the Dhemaji Municipal Board (DMB), a progressive civic body committed to improving the quality of life for its residents. Through innovative governance and community-centric projects, DMB has been instrumental in driving the town's transformation.

The Dhemaji Municipal Board has been at the forefront of implementing innovative practices to improve municipal governance and enhance public services. Here, we highlight some of their remarkable efforts that blend employee empowerment, public engagement, and sustainable development.

Empowering Employees for Better Services

DMB recognizes the crucial role of its workforce in delivering top-notch municipal services. To ensure employee morale and efficiency:

- **Enhanced Salaries and Incentives:** Salaries have been incrementally increased, reaching up to 60% growth within a month. Safai Mitras, the sanitation workers, have also seen significant salary hikes. Performance-based promotions and demotions further motivate employees.
- **Incentive System for Tax Collectors:** A unique incentive program rewards tax collectors who achieve property tax collection targets. Additionally, Rs. 15 lakhs from property tax collections are securely deposited for emergencies.
- **Health and Welfare:** Regular health camps, breakfast provisions, and distribution of warm clothes and shoes underscore DMB's commitment to employee welfare.

Public-Centric Innovations

DMB has introduced a series of measures to engage with and support the public:

- **Public Grievance Redressal:** A helpline and official Facebook page ensure effective communication. Complaints are logged systematically for resolution.
- **Door-to-Door Waste Collection:** Waste collection operates daily across various wards, with additional services for commercial areas. A partnership with the NGO SEDO promotes efficient waste management.
- **Beautification Projects:** Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs) have been transformed with beautification efforts at key locations such as Pegu Bazar Chariali and Nagar LP School. These initiatives create cleaner and more appealing urban spaces.

Sustainable Urban Development

DMB's commitment to sustainable urban living is evident in its numerous projects:

- **PMAY Housing Progress:** Stringent measures ensure the timely completion of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) houses. Defaulters face actions such as notices, FIRs, and direct meetings with officials.
- **Waste Management:** Two new twin-chamber waste collection vehicles have been added to the fleet, alongside regular maintenance of existing vehicles. Sirens on vehicles alert residents to waste collection schedules.
- **Solar Street Lighting:** Installation of 100 solar streetlights has brightened Dhemaji Town, with proper numbering ensuring systematic maintenance.
- **Drain Cleaning and Flood Prevention:** Comprehensive drain cleaning across wards prevents artificial flooding, safeguarding the community during heavy rains.
- **Vendor Infrastructure Revamp:** Plans are underway to rejuvenate the vendor and hawker buildings, enhancing their functionality and service to the public.

Community Awareness and Engagement

- **Education on Waste Segregation:** School-level programs teach students the importance of segregating waste, fostering environmentally conscious behavior from a young age.
- **Wall Paintings for Awareness:** Artistic wall paintings throughout the town spread messages about cleanliness and hygiene.

Simplified Office Processes

To streamline administrative processes, DMB requires property tax clearance receipts for obtaining No Objection Certificates (NOCs). Awareness campaigns and field visits by tax collectors ensure better compliance with trade license and property tax regulations.

A Vision of Progress

The Dhemaji Municipal Board's initiatives are shaping a cleaner, greener, and more connected Dhemaji. Their efforts showcase how municipal governance, when paired with innovation and community involvement, can lead to transformative change.

These initiatives not only enhance the quality of life for Dhemaji's residents but also serve as a model for other municipalities aiming to drive sustainable development.

This column is a part of our Revolving Editor's Desk featuring monthly articles which highlight diverse experiences from A view of the Narayanpur town officers of DoHUA.



Stills from inauguration of a RRR centre in Dhemaji

For sharing your thoughts on the Urban Space in Assam, please mail us at: dohuaurbanchronicles@gmail.com

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