

Urban Chronicles

A Monthly Newsletter

By Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Assam

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Government of Assam

In this newsletter you can expect	Initiative of the Month: Page 2	Buzz from the ULBs: Page 3	Stories from the First Mile: Page 4	Envisioning Urban: India Page 5	Urban Lexicon: Page 6	Feature of the Month: Page 7-8
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FOREWORD

*From the desk of the
Commissioner, Guwahati
Municipal Corporation*



As we welcome the April edition of Urban Chronicles, we bring into focus the transformative strides being made across Assam's urban landscape which is a testament to the power of innovation, collaboration, and sustainability. This month, we celebrate not only Guwahati's remarkable revival of Morakhali but also inspiring initiatives from municipalities like Bongaigaon, Sivasagar and Margherita, where community-driven efforts are redefining urban living.

Guwahati's Morakhali transformation from a neglected area to a model of cleanliness and vibrancy exemplifies our mission at GMC to foster inclusive, sustainable cities. Through systematic waste management, artistic beautification, and upgraded sanitation, this project has ignited a lasting shift in community mindset. We also bring to spotlight the latest initiative of tactical urbanism in Paltan Bazaar area undertaken by Assam Urban Knowledge Hub in collaboration with GMC which seeks to address the issues of traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. Similarly, Bongaigaon's CTU-to-park transformation and Margherita's solar-powered streets and river conservation efforts demonstrate how local governance, when paired with citizen engagement, can turn challenges into opportunities. Government schemes are creating real impact, as seen with Sivasagar's Mulagabhoru SHG/ALF revolutionizing local waste management since 2017 through doorstep collection, segregation education, and pioneering vermicompost solutions through NULM support.

This Earth Day, we also reflect on the urgent need for climate-resilient cities. From green infrastructure to clean energy transitions, our feature on sustainable urbanism underscores actionable strategies to combat climate change while enhancing livability.

As part of DoHUA, I invite every stakeholders, residents, NGOs, and policymakers to join us in this collective journey. Let Morakhali's success and Margherita's green metamorphosis inspire us to male similar such triumphs across other ULBs of Assam. Together, we can build cities that are not only efficient and beautiful but also equitable and enduring.

Here's to a greener, cleaner, and more connected urban future.

Shri Megha Nidhi Dahal, IAS
Commissioner
Guwahati Municipal Corporation

Initiative of the Month

Morakhali's Remarkable Transformation: From Neglect to Urban Model

Once plagued by unmanaged waste and dilapidated infrastructure, Morakhali has undergone a major transformation, emerging as a shining example of urban renewal. Through systematic interventions and community collaboration, the area has shed its former image of neglect, embracing cleanliness, aesthetic appeal, and improved civic amenities.

Waste Management: A Systematic Overhaul

Previously, Morakhali struggled with rampant garbage accumulation, with waste strewn across public spaces, creating both eyesores and health hazards. The introduction of a **door-to-door primary waste collection system**, spearheaded by NGOs, revolutionized disposal practices. By ensuring proper waste segregation and timely removal, the initiative drastically reduced littering, fostering a cleaner environment.

Urban Beautification: Art and Pride

Dull, crumbling walls have been revitalized into vibrant murals, injecting colour and creativity into the neighborhood. This beautification drive has not only enhanced Morakhali's visual appeal but also instilled a renewed sense of pride among residents, encouraging them to maintain their surroundings.

Sanitation Upgrades: Restoring Dignity

The community toilet, once dilapidated and unusable, has been **fully renovated**, offering a hygienic and

functional facility. This critical improvement has elevated public health standards, discouraging open defecation and promoting sanitation awareness.

Reliable Water Supply: A Lifeline for Hygiene

The **Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC)** played a pivotal role by ensuring a **consistent and clean water supply**, empowering residents to uphold personal and environmental hygiene. This intervention has been instrumental in sustaining the area's cleanliness drive.

A Shift in Community Mindset

Beyond infrastructural upgrades, Morakhali's transformation has **redefined residents' attitudes**. The community now actively participates in upkeep, demonstrating a collective commitment to cleanliness. Kamesh, a local resident, reflects, "Living in a cleaner environment has made us feel safer and prouder. We are grateful to GMC and all stakeholders for their relentless efforts in this remarkable change."

Conclusion: A Blueprint for Urban Revival

Morakhali's journey from neglect to vibrancy underscores the power of **coordinated planning, civic engagement, and sustained effort**. Its success serves as an inspiring model for other neighborhoods, proving that with determination, even the most challenged areas can be revitalized into **clean, healthy, and thriving communities**.



Transformation of Morakhali

Buzz from the ULBs

Bongaigaon Municipality Board Transforms CTUs into Vibrant Public Parks



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Mural paintings across Bongaigaon city promoting Swachhata!

Renowned for its three-time cleanliness award-winning initiatives, the Bongaigaon Municipality Board has taken another step toward to elevate its prowess in transforming Cleanliness Target Units into public-parks and gardens and chose two such GVPs near Bhakrivita Hindi School at ward No:18 and ward No:13 near Jyotinagar have been revitalized into lush recreational spaces, now buzzing with activities

These newly beautified parks have quickly become community hubs drawing residents of all ages. Children play freely, families gather, and neighbors bond, fostering stronger social ties while enhancing the area's livability. Adding to the charm, vibrant mural paintings across many lanes of the city adorn the spaces, creatively promoting the message of Swachhata (cleanliness) and inspiring civic responsibility among visitors. By transforming unused spaces into green, functional assets, the Bongaigaon Municipality Board continues to set a benchmark, proving that cleanliness and community welfare go hand in hand.

Before



After



CTU Transformation in Bongaigaon town

Paltan Bazar Reimagined: How Tactical Urbanism is Reshaping Guwahati's Streets



The Assam Urban Knowledge Hub's (AUKH) ongoing Tactical Urbanism intervention at Paltan Bazar Railway Junction loop exemplifies a dynamic approach to addressing urban congestion using small-scale, experimental approaches for meaningful urban change. While not a permanent fix, this method provides a crucial platform for experimentation, stakeholder engagement, and incremental improvements thus shifting the paradigm from "business as usual" to people-centric urban design.

By focusing initially on widening footpaths, organizing vendor zones and improving pedestrian crossings, the project shifts away from conventional car-centric planning towards more humane urban design. This iterative process reveals valuable insights about public behavior, informal economies and movement patterns that inform larger-scale interventions. More than just traffic management, the initiative aims to transform Paltan Bazar into a space where people want to spend time rather than merely pass through proving that temporary, low-cost interventions can challenge the status quo and pave the way for systemic transformation in urban planning. The project's success has been amplified by the enthusiastic collaboration of Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Assam State Transport Corporation and Guwahati Traffic Police, who have actively supported with space allocation, resource procurement and personnel coordination. This multi-agency cooperation underscores tactical urbanism's dual role as both practical problem-solver and philosophical alternative demonstrating how cities can become safer, more walkable and socially vibrant through collective action.

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Stories from the First Mile



Mulagabharu SHG receiving award during independence day celebration

In the heart of Sivasagar, a group of determined women is rewriting the story of urban waste management turning garbage into gold and challenges into opportunities. Formed in 2017 under DAY-NULM, the Mulagabharu SHG/ALF began as a small team with a big mission: to clean Ward 10 and empower themselves in the process.

A Revolution Begins with a Single Step

Armed with brooms, buckets and unrelenting resolve, the group started door-to-door waste collection under an MoU with Sivasagar Municipal Board. They didn't just collect garbage, they educated households on segregation, promoted composting and slowly transformed community habits. What began as a cleanliness drive soon became a movement.

Turning Trash into Treasure

In 2019, with training from DAY-NULM and a bank loan, the SHG took a bold leap **launching a vermicomposting project**. Today, they convert biodegradable waste into nutrient-rich compost, selling it to local farmers and gardeners. Their Material Recovery Facility (MRF) ensures dry waste is recycled efficiently, closing the loop on waste management.

Breaking Barriers, Building Legacies

The journey wasn't easy. Skepticism, financial



constraints, and balancing work with family duties tested their resolve. Yet, the women of Mulagabharu persevered. Their efforts earned them a national nomination for the Swachhata Excellence Award (2019-20) a testament to their impact.

Beyond Cleanliness: A Ripple Effect of Change

- Economic Freedom: 1,000 households served, livelihoods secured.
- Greener Communities: Less waste, more compost, healthier soil.
- Women Leading Change: From waste collectors to entrepreneurs and role models.

Their story has inspired even college students, who visit their vermicompost unit for research, proving that true change starts at the last mile.

A Beacon of Hope

Mulagabhoru's journey is more than waste management, **it's about transforming lives while transforming cities.** As they say, 'We didn't just clean our ward; we reclaimed our future.'

Their message to the world?

Where others see waste, we see opportunity. Where some see barriers, we find a way. 'Earlier, people hesitated to talk to us, now they call us 'the green warriors'. – A member of Mulagabhoru SHG said

Envisioning Urban



Building sustainable cities

As we celebrate Earth Day, the focus on building climate-resilient cities has never been more critical. Cities in India, including those in Assam, are increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts like flooding, heatwaves, and air pollution. Urban governance plays a pivotal role in ensuring cities are prepared to tackle these challenges. This Earth Day, let's explore how urban governance can drive climate resilience while fostering sustainable development.

Green Infrastructure for Resilient Cities

Cities can combat climate change by integrating

green spaces like parks, urban forests, and wetlands. For example, Guwahati, is home to the Deepor Beel wetland, a critical ecosystem that acts as a natural flood buffer and supports biodiversity. Urban governance must prioritize green infrastructure in city planning and allocate budgets for sustainable landscaping. Similarly, Mumbai's Mangrove Restoration Project has shown how restoring natural ecosystems can protect cities from coastal flooding.

Clean Energy Transition

Shifting to solar and wind power cuts urban

carbon footprints. Gujarat's Charanka Solar Park demonstrates large-scale renewable potential. Cities should incentivize rooftop solar and community projects for wider clean energy access.

Sustainable Mobility Solutions

Efficient public transport reduces emissions. Guwahati's CNG buses and expanding electric transit networks are steps forward. Further cities should expand electric bus networks, build bike lanes, and promote walkable neighborhoods to create integrated, low-carbon mobility solutions.

Smart Water Management

With floods and water scarcity rising, cities need resilient systems. Rainwater harvesting, permeable pavements, and wastewater recycling can help. Assam, prone to flooding, should invest in adaptive water infrastructure and community-led flood management.

Energy-Efficient Buildings

Energy-efficient buildings are key to reducing urban emissions. The Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) in India mandates energy-efficient designs for new constructions. Cities like Bengaluru have adopted green building standards, resulting in reduced energy consumption.

Foster Community Engagement

Resilient cities require active citizen participation. For instance, Community Clean-Up Drives have brought together residents to tackle pollution and protect the river ecosystem.

Urban governance is the backbone of climate action in cities. By implementing these strategies, local governments can reduce carbon emissions and meet climate targets, improve public health and quality of life for residents. This Earth Day, let's celebrate the power of urban governance in shaping a sustainable future!

Urban Lexicon: Emerging Terminologies in shaping urban life

Last mile connectivity in public transport refers to the crucial link between a major transit hub like bus terminal, or train station and a passenger's final destination. A seamless public transport system isn't just about metros and buses; rather it's about bridging the "last mile" between stations and final destinations. Without efficient last-mile solutions, commuters often revert to private vehicles, undermining sustainability goals and increasing congestion and emissions. **Innovative Solutions in action** like shared mobility, micro transit, walking and cycling through the creation of pedestrian friendly pathways and bike-sharing (e.g, Delhi's Yulu bikes) encourage eco-friendly last mile travel.



The future of urban mobility hinges on closing the last-mile gap. Smarter connectivity means fewer cars, cleaner air, and more efficient cities!

EDITOR'S DESK

Feature of the Month

Revolving Editor's Desk
Feature of the Month

Dhiraj Bhattacharya

Executive Officer, Margherita Municipal Board



Margherita's Green Metamorphosis: Community-Driven Innovation for a Sustainable Tomorrow

About the author

Dhiraj Bhattacharya serves as the Executive Officer in Margherita, the easternmost and last urban local body (ULB) of Assam. With a keen interest in inquisitive exploration, wildlife, and discovering new landscapes, he combines his passion for nature with his professional responsibilities. Holding a master's degree in Horticulture and Agriculture, Dhiraj envisions a future where he remains deeply connected to his roots while continuing to serve and contribute to the well-being of his community. His dedication to sustainable development and civic engagement reflects his commitment to making a meaningful impact.

Introduction:

Perched in Assam's easternmost corner in Tinsukia district, Margherita town known as the coal queen of India is now emerging as a city exemplifying sustainable urban development initiatives, where green innovations are crafting an inspiring future.

The Margherita Municipal Board has taken a visionary leap toward sustainability by installing 338 solar street lights along key thoroughfares, including National Highway 315, Margherita FRU Road, Police Station Road and various wards. This initiative, launched last year has significantly enhanced connectivity and safety while championing environmental stewardship. The benefits of this project are manifold: enhanced safer commutes for pedestrians and motorists

- **Enhanced** safer commutes for pedestrians and motorists, particularly during nighttime.

- **Environmental Impact:** By reducing reliance on conventional electricity, the town has curtailed carbon emissions, aligning with global sustainability goals.
- **Economic Efficiency:** The long-term cost savings from solar energy underscore the project's financial viability.
- **Aesthetic and Educational Value:** The lights have revitalized the town's visual appeal while fostering community awareness about renewable energy.

This initiative exemplifies how green technology can transform urban landscapes, positioning Margherita as a model for sustainable development.

Revitalizing the Dehing River: A Cleanliness Drive for Ecological Preservation

Another major initiative undertaken under MMB is the revitalization of the The Dehing River, a lifeline for Margherita's spiritual and ecological fabric. It had fallen victim to rampant pollution due to indiscriminate plastic waste disposal. Recognizing this crisis, the Municipal Board spearheaded a week-long cleanliness drive, mobilizing volunteers, environmental groups, and residents to restore the river's vitality.

The initiative successfully removed plastic waste from riverbanks and ghats, restoring the water body's natural beauty. Through community engagement, it fostered a sense of responsibility toward environmental conservation. Future plans include installing CCTV cameras and erecting boundaries to

prevent pollution, ensuring the river remains pristine for future generations. This effort underscores the impact of collective action in protecting natural heritage and promoting ecological awareness.



Cleanliness drive at Dehing river

Transforming Waste into Art: Margherita's Zero-Waste Revolution

In 2024, the Margherita Municipal Board identified Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs) and Cleanliness Targeted Units (CTUs) as part of a bold initiative to combat littering and mismanaged waste. Through creativity and technology, these spaces were transformed into vibrant community assets.

These notable achievements underline how innovation and community involvement can transform environmental challenges into opportunities for beautification and education. At Segunbari Tinali, a former garbage hotspot near Dipti Medical Store was repurposed into an artistic selfie stand using recycled tires and old scooters. Additionally, waste-to-art installations revitalized the CTU near Satsang Vihar Road, where flower plant stands crafted from plastic bottles merged aesthetics with sustainability. To ensure lasting impact, technological vigilance

was prioritized in 2025 with the installation of 24 CCTV cameras across GVPs, enabling continuous monitoring and maintenance of cleanliness. Together, these projects showcase the power of creativity and collective action in fostering sustainable urban development.



CTU turned into a selfie point

Celebrating Excellence: Margherita's Republic Day Triumph

On the 76th Republic Day, the Margherita Municipal Board earned accolades for its exemplary exhibition at the central field. Their tableau showcased pivotal government schemes, including PMAY-U, NULM-U and Swachh Bharat Mission (U), highlighting initiatives like door-to-door waste collection and model housing. The Board's efforts were recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation, presented by the Co-District Commissioner, cementing their role as pioneers in urban development.

Conclusion: Margherita's Blueprint for Sustainable Urban Living

From solar energy and river conservation to waste management, Margherita's initiatives reflect a holistic approach to progress. By blending innovation, community engagement and environmental consciousness, the town sets a benchmark for sustainable urban development, one that other municipalities would do well to emulate. Margherita's journey is not just about transformation; it's about inspiring a greener, cleaner, and more inclusive future.

* column is part of our Revolving Editor's Desk, featuring monthly articles which highlight diverse experiences from officers of DoHUA

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