

Urban Chronicles

A Monthly Newsletter

By Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Assam

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Government of Assam

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Srimanta Shankardev Sishu Udyan, Dhubri

FOREWORD

*From the desk of the
Director, Directorate of
Municipal Administration*



The July edition of Urban Chronicles presents a compelling narrative of Assam's urban transformation driven by institutional empowerment, digital innovation, and community-led change.

A landmark development is the launch of Assam's dedicated Urban Cadres, bringing trained officers into the Assam Urban Administration, Engineering, and Financial Services to ensure grassroots governance that is responsive, accountable, and technically sound. Digital reforms continue to play a key role, with platforms like the Unified Urban Portal, UPYOG F&A Module and digital property tax system enhancing transparency and service delivery. This edition also features impactful grassroots innovations—from Bilasipara's plastic banks and Goalpara's stray cattle management to SHG-led initiatives in Kharupetia. Dhubri stands out for its citizen-centric reforms and inclusive urban renewal efforts. Surat's model of converting treated wastewater into revenue highlights sustainability in action. The edition also introduces Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) as a nature-based solution to boost urban resilience and ecological balance in Assam.

Gratitude goes to all municipal bodies, officers, and community groups whose efforts are reflected in these pages. May their stories inspire and energize our collective mission toward vibrant, inclusive urban across Assam.

Warm Regards,

Shri Tankeswar Das, ACS
Director, Directorate of Municipal Administration

Initiative of the Month

Strengthening Urban Governance: Role of the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA)

The Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), Assam, established in 1969, is the nodal agency overseeing Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the state. It provides administrative support, monitors finances and coordinates between the government and ULBs to ensure efficient urban governance and effective service delivery.

Transforming urban governance with Dedicated Urban Cadre

To strengthen and provide accountable governance in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), Assam has introduced three dedicated Urban Cadres as a key reform under the DMA. This initiative aims to deploy trained officers to manage urban services, implement governmental schemes, and enhance municipal capacity. As part

of this reform, three specialized Municipal Cadres with 103 sanctioned posts each have been created:

1. Assam Urban Administrative Service officers to be posted as Executive Officers (EOs) in ULBs
2. Assam Urban Engineering Service officers to be posted as Urban Technical Officers (UTOs) in ULBs
3. Assam Urban Financial Service officers to be posted as Financial Management Officers (FMOs) in ULBs

The EOs, UTOs and FMOs recruited under the three Urban Services have been posted across ULBs in the state and within the verticals of DoHUA, significantly enhancing the administrative, technical and financial capacity of the Urban Administration.



The first batch of AUAS with Hon'ble Minister and Senior Officials DoHUA

Digitization of Urban Services: Unified Portal for the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

To enhance citizen access to municipal services, the Unified Portal was launched by the Hon'ble Minister of DoHUA on 10th November 2023. Implemented by the DMA, it provides a single digital platform

for accessing services. Key offerings include trade license issuance and renewal and property tax collection. Additional services including online applications for water connections, hall bookings, hoarding permissions, movie shooting permissions, grievance redressal, and cesspool services are currently live on the portal.

Property Tax Assessment and Self-Assessment via Mobile App:

To streamline property tax collection and enhance ease of access of services for citizens, a mobile app named as 'Assam Urban Services' has been developed for self-assessment of taxes and online payment of property taxes across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Assam. The system has also been integrated with key platforms and utilities like Sewa Setu Portal and APDCL for enhanced efficiency. The App also enables the users to raise their grievances ensuring prompt redressal of the same.

Platform Access Details:

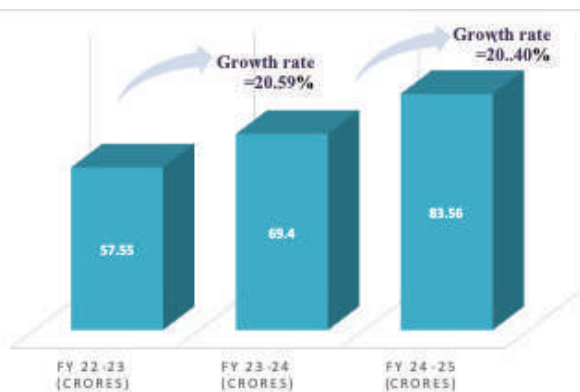
- **Web Portal:** service.assamurban.in
- **QR for Mobile App:**



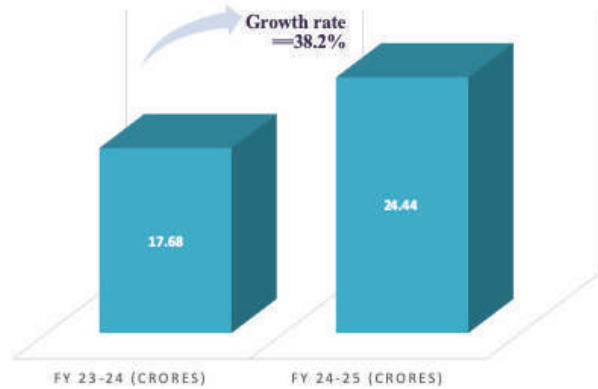
Performance Indicators:

Indicator	Before Implementation	After Implementation
Total Property Assessments	3,48,000	5,21,919
Total Properties Geotagged	Nil	4,87,766

Year on Year Developments:



Property Tax Collection Trends



Online Property Tax Collection Trends



Trade License Trend

Modernizing Urban Financial Systems through UPYOG portal

As part of a broader push for digital governance, the Directorate has initiated the transitioning of the ULBs from a cash based system to a double entry accrual based accounting system (DEABAS). The initiative includes training, phased implementation, and future integration with key systems, supported by a real-time financial dashboard currently under development. Once fully rolled out, the new system will bring all ULBs under a unified accounting framework, paving the way for better financial transparency, improved auditability, and smarter urban governance across the state.

The Directorate of Municipal Administration, through these reforms aspires to improve urban governance, ensure citizen centric service delivery and create citizen friendly urban spaces. These reforms are expected to increase transparency and accountability across the ULBs in the state.

Buzz from the ULBs

Bilasipara Leads the Way: Plastic Banks Set Up in Commercial Hubs to collect Plastic Waste Separately at Source

To address the issue of rising plastic pollution and drainage blockages, Bilasipara Municipal Board has installed plastic banks in commercial areas. Aligned with the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (RRR) model, the initiative promotes sustainable waste management by involving local industries in plastic reuse.

The initiative began with a survey to identify high plastic waste zones in Bilasipara's commercial areas. Based on the findings, 10 plastic banks made of M.S. Rod and C.R. Sheet were installed at a cost of ₹60,000. These banks enable source-level segregation and serve as collection points for businesses and the public. One Plastic Bank covers approximately 5-7 nos. of Commercial Shops and collects 5-6 Kgs of

Plastic Waste daily. Regular drives are conducted to empty the banks and transport the waste to the Solid Resource Management Centre at Hakama, Ward No. 9, under Bilasipara Municipal Board.

Aligned with RRR principles, segregated plastic waste is sent to a nearby brick kiln for use as fuel. This reduces plastic pollution and supports local industry by providing a cost-effective alternative fuel source.

The project reduces plastic pollution in Bilasipara's commercial areas, improves waste management, and promotes sustainable fuel. Future plans include expanding to residential zones and raising public awareness on responsible plastic disposal.



Before Plastic bank



After Plastic Bank

Goalpara Takes Action Against Stray Cattle Menace to Ensure Public Safety

Stray cows and goats have been causing significant inconvenience to the residents of Goalpara town. Irresponsible cattle owners are often responsible for major road mishaps. Incidents of cows stealing groceries in the market area have also been frequently reported. To mitigate the stray cattle menace, stringent action has been taken by Goalpara Municipal board against the cattle owners who let their livestock occupy public roads.

Initially GMB made an appeal to the residents through mobile mike service not to allow their cattle to stray on public roads. A task force was created to seize

the straying cattle and transport them to a newly constructed cattle pound. The drive is conducted on a weekly basis. The pound provides a temporary shelter to the impounded cattle where due care is taken by feeding them and keeping them healthy. A penalty of 1000 RS for cows and 500 RS for goats is imposed on the owners when they take back their cattle from the pound.

These steps have shown some positive results and are expected to reduce road accidents and remove the inconveniences of the public on the streets of Goalpara town.



Task force capturing stray cattle and moving them to the pound

Stories from the first mile

SELF-HELP GROUPS (SHGs) TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE

Under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), SHGs namely Joy Maa, Janaki, Santi, and Jyoti under the Kharupetia Municipal Board have made significant strides towards self-reliance and economic empowerment. These groups have availed bank loans to run small-scale businesses focused on producing ladoos, pickles, masalas, haldi, and handmade items from jute and recycled materials. Their handcrafted and homemade goods have gained attention, and they were given a platform to showcase their work at an **“Exhibition camp”** organized by the Army Camp at Patharughat, Sipajhar on the occasion of **Krishak Swahid Divas**.

The SHGs actively market their goods in urban and

rural areas, steadily building a loyal customer base. Their work has earned appreciation from dignitaries, including the Honourable Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs and the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, who praised their entrepreneurial efforts and quality craftsmanship. A significant milestone was achieved when The Kharupetia Municipal Board signed an MoU with the 23 BN SSB Lalpool (Assam) to manage the camp’s solid waste and promote sustainability, while the SSB camp will support local women-led SHGs by selling their handmade products through its canteens. These efforts have empowered the women to become financially independent, contributing to their family income and strengthening the localeconomy.



Participation of SHGs in different exhibitions

Envisioning Urban

Surat Turns Sewage into Revenue

Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) has successfully turned wastewater into a valuable resource, generating ₹140 crore in revenue by supplying treated water to local industries.

Known for its thriving textile and solar panel manufacturing sectors, Surat has a high daily industrial water demand. To address this sustainably, SMC collects wastewater through the city's sewerage system and treats it at three plants with a combined capacity of 115 million litres per day.

The treated water is then supplied to industries,

promoting reuse and reducing reliance on freshwater sources. This initiative not only supports environmental sustainability but also provides a significant financial boost to the municipal body.

Surat's success in generating revenue by selling treated wastewater to industries offers a powerful model for Assam. By turning wastewater into resource, Assam can reduce pressure on freshwater sources, support industries and create a sustainable revenue stream in some of the larger ULBs. This is a great example of Urban innovation which also promotes climate resilience.

Urban Lexicon

Emerging Terminologies in shaping urban life

Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI)

Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) refers to a network of natural and semi-natural systems in urban areas that manage water (blue) and vegetation/green cover (green) together to deliver multiple ecological, social, and infrastructural benefits. Instead of relying solely on grey infrastructure (like concrete drains, culverts, and pipes), BGI promotes sustainable, nature-based solutions that integrate water management with biodiversity, open spaces, and community spaces.

Components of BGI:

- **Blue Infrastructure:** Rivers, wetlands, lakes, stormwater channels, constructed wetlands.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Parks, urban forests, green roofs, rain gardens, bioswales, peri-urban agriculture.

Relevance of Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) in Assam

In response to increasing urban flood risks and climate challenges, Assam particularly Guwahati is adopting Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) to create resilient and sustainable urban ecosystems. Key interventions include the **restoration of natural wetlands such as Silsako Beel** and the **integration of Deepor Beel into stormwater management**, enabling rainwater to drain into natural basins rather than

overstressed urban networks. Regulatory measures mandating rainwater harvesting and green space preservation in new developments further reinforce BGI adoption.

BGI solutions such as urban ponds, permeable pavements and green corridors are helping to absorb excess rainwater, reduce surface runoff, and improve overall water quality thereby significantly mitigating urban flooding.

A pioneering example of ecological restoration in Assam is the North Lakhimpur Urban Forest Project. Developed under the "Doh Shahr Ek Rupayan" programme, this initiative transforms a 40-year-old municipal landfill into a vibrant urban eco-park. Spearheaded by DoHUA, in collaboration with Janaagraha and the Jana Urban Space Foundation, the project exemplifies sustainable urban renewal.



Conceptual visualisation of Proposed Urban Forest using the Miyawaki method in North Lakhimpur

Revolving EDITOR'S DESK Feature of the Month



Namrata Pradip Sharma
Executive Officer, Dhubri Municipal Board

Dhubri: A Heritage Town on the Path of Transformation

About the Author:

The Executive Officer of the Dhubri Municipal Board is committed to enhancing urban governance with an emphasis on sanitation, public health, and environmental sustainability. Guided by the belief that cleaner homes, neighborhoods, and public spaces contribute to a healthier city, efforts are centered around encouraging community participation through cleanliness drives and awareness initiatives. With deep respect for Dhubri's rich cultural heritage, the aim remains to foster a cleaner, greener, and more inclusive town through steady, collaborative progress.

Dhubri – The Riverside Town Rooted in Heritage

Established in 1883, the Dhubri Municipal Board (DMB) is one of Assam's oldest urban local bodies, managing a 4.62 sq. km area surrounded by the Brahmaputra and Gadadhar rivers. Known for its rich heritage, Dhubri features historic sites like the 17th-century Gurudwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib and Panchpeer Dargah. With a current estimated population of 76,065, the town has a density of about 16,460 people per sq. km, further stressed by a high daily floating population.

In recent years, DMB has made transformative strides in cleanliness, infrastructure, governance, and community engagement, positioning Dhubri as a model for inclusive urban management.

Citizen-Centric Governance: Helpline for All

Understanding the need for accessible governance, DMB launched a dedicated helpline (9401937587) to ensure residents can promptly report sanitation issues, water supply problems, garbage complaints, and more. This helpline enhances accountability, responsiveness, and transparency in municipal service delivery.

Property Tax Reform: From Burden to Participation & Rewarding Responsibility

DMB introduced a commission-based property tax collection model, leading to a 155% increase in revenue through improved coverage and reduced evasion. To encourage timely payments, taxpayers receive free

blue and green dustbins, promoting waste segregation and supporting Swachh Bharat goals. So far, 2210 pairs of dustbins have been distributed since last 8 months. This combined approach not only strengthens municipal finances but also fosters civic responsibility and cleaner neighborhoods.

From Garbage Spots to Green Spaces

Under its beautification drive, 49 Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs) have been converted into landscaped, clean spaces with fencing and awareness signage. DMB has also developed notable urban landmarks such as the Clock Tower, Netai Dhubuni Park, Victoria Park, and Srimanta Shankardev Sishu Udyan, while installing statues of eminent personalities like Srimanta Shankardev, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika to inspire civic pride. A modern swimming pool is also under construction to enhance recreational facilities.

Driving Sustainability with Zero Waste Institutions

DMB, in collaboration with Feedback Foundation, is helping schools and colleges transform into Zero Waste Institutions, guiding them to adopt waste segregation, composting, and plastic reduction practices that set a benchmark for the entire community.



Vivekananda Vidyapith High School, Ward no- 16, DMB

Citizen's Charter: A Promise of Accountability

DMB has adopted a Citizen's Charter that sets clear timelines and standards for services like garbage collection, water supply, and grievance redressal—empowering citizens to hold the Board accountable and ensuring their expectations are met efficiently.”

Pouro Sakhis: Women Leading from the Front

A standout initiative by DMB in collaboration with Feedback Foundation is the launch of 17 'Pouro Sakhis' (Friends of the Municipality)—trained local women who promote sanitation through door-to-door waste assessment, awareness, and community cleanliness drives. Acting as change agents, they educate citizens on waste segregation, recycling, and composting, bridging the gap between policy and people.

Community Engagement with SHGs & Schools

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have played a crucial role in civic campaigns. On World Environment Day and International Yoga Day, SHG members planted around 2,000 saplings and over 500 women participated at the household level, involving their families and turning these events into community-wide celebrations of health, wellbeing, and environmental awareness.

DMB has also engaged school children through educational programs on waste segregation, hosted 'Waste to Art' competitions, conducted wall painting drives, and organized quiz competitions for children of Safai Karmacharis, fostering creativity and environmental awareness among future citizens.

Heritage Inspiring Progress

With its **historic legacy, cultural diversity**, and forward-looking reforms, Dhubri is emerging as a model of small-town transformation. As a **bustling commercial hub** with vibrant markets and trade routes, and a **popular pilgrimage center** for diverse faiths, the town continues to bridge **rivers, religions, languages, and histories**, while evolving into a cleaner, smarter, and more inclusive municipality.



Pouro sakhis, Dhubri Municipal Board



Clock Tower, Dhubri



Netai Dhubuni Park, Dhubri

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

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