CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary:

After a thorough and extensive sample survey accompanied with empirical study and observation, some important facts have been identified regarding the process of urbanization in Diphu town. Inferences from the facts have also been drawn to serve the purpose of the research work.

Research questions as were framed based on limited known facts and conceptual framework prior to investigation, now have been brought to the light for correlating with the facts found out. Statistical derivatives from the investigation show that some of the research questions are fully satisfied with the findings, while some one is partially and others not at all.

The objective of the research work, though in general, is to focus on the trend of urbanization in both the hill districts of Assam; yet, special confinement is to visualize the growth of the urban space of Diphu town. The towns/urban centres in the districts are randomly distributed (Map-3.1). Many of them are located on the National Highways whereas some are on the railway tracks.

After 1985, remarkable changes in this region have been observed in the field of urbanization. Out of the presently existing 11 number of towns in the districts, six were notified and accordingly declared during 1980s. It has been noticed that some new locations are going to come up in each of the districts with a large concentration of population based on administrative and commercial activities.
In case of Karbi Anglong the places of importance of this kind are Silonijan, Manja, Parokhowa, Dengaon, Baithalangso (Vothatlangso), Kheroni, Ulukunchi, etc. Places likely to emerge as an urban centre in the near future in case of North Cachar Hills are Gunjung, Dehangi, Langting, Harangajao, Diyungbra, and so on and so forth.

The growth pattern of Diphu town, being considered as a special reference has been correlated with the other urban centres of both the hill districts. The physical/environmental, social, economic, political, ethnic and to a large extent cultural set-up are almost similar in between these two political units of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts. It has been found that the pattern of growth and urban sprawl in case of Diphu town are affected by various factors. Presence of all those factors has been observed there in every urban centre of the districts. Therefore, a correlation between Diphu and other urban centres can be done and inferences can be made for the future planning and development in those centres.

The native rural people belong to hill tribes who have migrated to different urban centres in these hill districts obviously had their different purposes. But the weightage and number vary. As per the survey conducted in the Diphu town, it has come to light that a considerable section (55.50%) of the tribal population especially of rural Karbi Anglong have come to settle in the town mainly for employment purpose. On the other hand, education purpose accounts for 25.15% whereas civic facilities and amenities available in Diphu attract only 10.25% of the total surveyed tribal people. Employment opportunities of various kinds in different sectors pulled many rural dwellers since the creation of the district.
Since almost all the situations everywhere in the region (both the hill districts) have the similarities in various respects like physical, social and cultural settings; hence, the inductive reasoning can be made from the facts found in Diphu urban area for other towns in the districts. It is, therefore, finally summarized from the above discussion that the civic facilities and amenities available in the urban centres are not the sole and major factors to attract the rural tribal population to the centres of these hill districts.

The laws and acts pertaining to transfer and alienation of land prevailed in this Sixth Scheduled area are different from that of the other parts of the state. It has already been mentioned in the previous discussion that there are restrictions in this regard especially for non-tribal, and also for tribal originally belong to other regions other than a few bona fide hill tribes. It is, therefore, found the matter to be relevant in acquiring land properties permanently. But the degree of influence of the prevailing laws/acts upon the processes of urbanization in Diphu has been found insignificant. The statistical figures derived from the field survey have revealed that about 93.69% of the population as a whole did not face any kind of obligation or hindrance in case of holding or acquiring a land either temporarily or permanently in the past, and about 89.81% in the recent periods. In this context, it is to be summarized that if the influences of the land alienation laws and acts stand as barriers, there would not have been such a fast growth of urban area of Diphu town at all. The mystery behind the fact is the existence of loopholes through which non-tribal and non-indigenous tribal people are acquiring lands in the name of donation, gift and long-term lease or in other ways instead of direct purchase and transfer.

Diphu is situated on an undulating terrain with higher altitude towards south, east and west. The river Diphu makes the eastern boundary of the present town area.
On the other hand, the Diphu Reserved Forest (R.F.) together with the railway track forms the south eastern town boundary. The entire western side though surround earlier by R.F., now has been cleared and converted to settlement areas. New settlement growths in clustered forms are common scenarios beyond the Diphu river toward east. Even to the south of Diphu Railway Station many houses have come up by encroaching the forest lands beyond the river. These physical features today are no more to become barriers for the urban sprawl of Diphu town. The evidences of sub-urban growth beyond the present Master Plan area boundary reveal the facts to a great extent (Map-4.4 and Plate-22).

6.2 Conclusion:

Diphu, an attractive town of fascinating landscape, is now growing larger and larger both in terms of areal extent and the size of population followed by various developmental activities. Concentration of people from different culture and religion has given this urban place a cosmopolitan feature.

The term ‘Sustainable urban development’ is being frequently used in different fields of urban studies. The future of a town in terms of sustainability depends greatly upon the attitudes of the urbanites. Growth of urban areas is positively related to the development of any kind. On the other hand, every developmental work has its more or less anti-environmental effects. A number of serious problems prevailing in the Diphu urban area have been identified during the course of the study. Out of them, the predominant ones are as follows:

i. Illegal encroachment of public lands and properties,

ii. Wanton destruction of trees and Reserved Forest areas,
iii. Paucity of potable water,

iv. Lacking of open space,

v. Improper garbage disposal system,

vi. Shrinkage of urban wetland area,

vii. Traffic congestion,

viii. Solid waste pollution and

ix. Lacking of good standard bus terminus.

Explanation:

i. Perhaps, one of the most important problems faced by the town is said to be the illegal encroachment of public/government lands and properties by some individuals. Not only the lands alone, at some pockets of the town many government residential quarters have been encroached and occupied illegally. In this context adequate strategies should be adopted to recover these by the concerned authority. It is also advisable to the individuals involved having illicit political linkages to refrain from such activities for the greater interest of the town. Otherwise, developmental works might be getting hampered.

ii. Earlier Diphu was covered with a good number of green trees especially alongside the roads. It has now become a matter of concern that nobody is seen going forward to stop unauthorized felling the remaining plants within the urban area. Whoever and whenever decides to cut the roadside trees, nobody protests. The hue and cry of the environment-concerned N.G.O.s in this regard is totally zero. Even the Environment and Forest Department at many times is also found to be silent. The burning problem is that the urban growth is taking place at the cost of forest lands under Reserved Forest in the fringe (peripheral areas) of the town.
Protection measures from the governmental and non-governmental sectors are utmost necessary in order to conserve the natural environment in the town. Afforestation programmes accompanied with awareness campaign through proper action plans should be conducted at the earliest.

iii. It is true that the Diphuans have been suffering from the paucity of potable water. The governmental water supply service is not enough to meet the need of this fast growing town. Only about 25% of the town area is served with the supply-water by the Public Health and Engineering (P.H.E.) Department. Moreover, much of the served area does not get regular service. Although the ring wells are the only major alternative source of water of the people in this urban area, most of them remain dry during much of the winter season. In this regard, the concerned department should take initiatives for the expansion of the service so as to cover the entire urban area with regularity.

iv. Sufficient open space especially in the form of playground, outdoor stadium, lake, park, etc. is essential for every society. In case of urban areas there should be at least 15% open space out of the total geographical area. The urban area of Diphu has limited numbers of such open space accounting for only 10.24% which is not matched even to the total population of the area. Rapid urban growth is responsible for the reduction and shrinkage of open space in the town. Efforts should be made by the public to compel the concerned authority for keeping enough open space in possession for present and future usage. In this regard, the attitudes of the individuals having political influence must be wise and positive.

v. Urban centres produce large quantities of garbage. But the treatment and disposal of the garbage should properly be done from the environmental point of
view. It is seen in case of Diphu that no adequate measures have so far been adopted by the authority for the environment-friendly disposal of garbage. Huge quantities of garbage composed of plastic, polythene, glass, etc. are dumped in the nearby Dhansiri Reserved Forest area. This kind of activities of the Town Committee cannot be commended. In this regard, every urbanite of Diphu should also be conscious for keeping these green areas clean. The local urban bodies may be suggested to take up schemes for establishing modern garbage treatment plant as early as possible. Further, the social and environmental activist groups should organize environment awareness programmes among the student-groups of schools and colleges, and also in the residential areas of different localities in the town and the suburbs.

vi. A very important problem not easily felt by the common people or any authority concerned in Diphu is the 'shrinkage of urban wetland area'. The wetlands help especially in recharging ground water storage apart from storm water storage, ecological balance, aqua culture, beautification, tourism development and other recreational activities. In view of decrease in the ground water table followed by shortage of potable water in this area, it is to be suggested to take up strategies for conservation of the existing wetland areas before the time is over. In this respect, the unscrupulous general tendency of the opportunists to encroach the natural wetland areas must directly be discarded and be discouraged. All such efforts made by anybody else should also be booked into by amending laws if needed.

vii. Like many other towns and cities, the town of Diphu is also facing the problem of traffic congestion owing to the increasing number of vehicles on the roads. It will be a serious problem in the coming years if no proper management through action plans is adopted in this regard. At this moment, the only suggestive
measure is to widen all the existing narrow roads and lanes up to a maximum extent looking future necessities.

viii. Pollution of soil and water by non-biodegradable solid waste materials has been observed throughout the urban area of Diphu. The stream and river beds have become dumping grounds of various solid waste materials produced mainly by the commercial areas. The district administration tried many times to ban the use of polythene carry-bags; but eventually failed to do so. It is advisable first to make the public aware regarding the bad effects of such activities and then to impose regulations on it.

ix. Being the district’s headquarters of Karbi Anglong, Diphu town has been experiencing comparatively higher degree of traffic flow amongst all the towns of the region. This is why it needs a permanent bus terminus with sufficient facilities for public usage. The present small bus station as well as the temporary one positioned especially on the road nearby the Gandhi Park is not enough to serve the growing number of passengers. The concerned authorities should take initiatives to fulfil the needs as early as possible. In this regard, it can be suggested to establish a permanent bus terminus in the area opposite to the Gandhi Park where the present small intra-district bus station is existed. For this purpose, the surrounding temporary commercial establishments should be shifted to other locations by giving the people adequate compensations. It should however be recommended to revive the former bus terminus of the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) located beside the Diphu-Manja road near Rongkhelan for inter-district-cum-interstate transportation.
For future development and well-being of the town, it can further be suggested at the conclusion that proper action plans are to be adopted not merely in the form of black and white but in reality by removing all the lacunae.

Regular periodic survey and assessment of the unprecedented urban sprawl using satellite data to prepare a detailed database will enable sorting out of strategic action plans for efficient management in judicious utilization of the land and forest resources in this area.

In this context, it could however be mentioned that without proper integrated approach through coordination and co-operation amongst the local urban bodies and the concerned departments nothing more can be expected. The role of politico-administrative systems should also be favourable and up to the mark.

Keeping all the situations of Diphu urban area in mind, the action plans for other old and new towns of the hill districts should properly be implemented for their sustainable development in the future to come.