CHAPTER 4: THE EFFECT OF FUNCTIONING OF THE GUWAHATI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (FINDINGS I).
CHAPTER – IV

THE EFFECT OF FUNCTIONING OF THE GUWAHATI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (FINDINGS: I)

4.1: Introduction:

This chapter is devoted in recording the findings of the study. The findings are based on, as stated in the methodology, (ref: Chapter-I) both on empirical data collected from field and the Government agencies including Guwahati Municipal Corporation and the secondary sources such as orders of the Government, orders of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, publications, reports, etc. In order to present the data systematically, the findings based on the government sources and Secondary data are dealt with in this chapter while the findings based on Primary data from field is dealt with in the next chapter. The next chapter thus also in other words is a chapter that examines the authenticity of the claims of the government agencies about their performances and the implementation scenario of the schemes.

The Primary data for this chapter have been collected both by way of a two-layered Questionnaire and an Interview Guide cum Schedule. Important cases were recorded carefully during the survey. The sources of data for this purpose were officials and staff of Guwahati Municipal Corporation and related offices, Members of the Corporation, political leaders, professors, lawyers and ex-councillors.

The objective of the survey was to produce data to examine the factors affecting on the one hand economic decentralisation and on the
other hand political decentralisation. Under the head of economic
decentralisation it is attempted to examine how far the Guwahati
Municipal Corporation has succeeded in taking advantage of
decentralisation of authority on various subjects and could take up action
on its own and in the process how far it has succeeded in providing the
infrastructural facilities and the civic amenities to the people of the city.
The nature and quantitative strength of the infrastructures existing as per-
record of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has been analysed.
Similarly under political decentralisation it has been attempted to examine
the role of official functionaries in conducting elections, enforcing rules
and procedures followed during election, the election process as a whole
and then the nature and status of elected representatives in the office.

Procuring data and information pertaining to the early years of the
Guwahati Municipal Corporation was a challenging task, all being
scattered in the files of the Corporation in the various offices. Moreover,
the records relating to the early years particularly election results and the
minutes of the meetings of various years have not been compiled and as a
result some valuable data have been lost in the process. Visits to the
Guwahati Municipal Corporation offices spread out in various parts of the
city like the one at Brahmaputra Riverfront in Panbazar, Uzanbazar,
Bhutnath, Chandmari, Zoo Road yielded good results.

The set of questionnaire used to procure data from this set of
respondents were vastly different from the second set of questionnaire.
This is because the respondents in this category are either directly involved
in the matters of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation or have clear
knowledge about functioning of the Corporation. It is because of this that
their view is very important than the commonplace person. It was assumed that they would offer their views on any matter considering the circumstantial hazards related to it. The citizens chosen in the sample are all well known persons and have contributed to the society from their own field of specialisation. They all have been living in the city since ages and are well acquainted with the problems of the city of Guwahati. Economically they belong to upper middle class strata having a monthly income of Rupees 15,000/- and above.

4.2: Political Decentralisation:

All political abilities in democratic systems develop from the community. Empowerment of the populace by mounting their command over governance should consequently be the fundamental programme of a democratic government; but it gives the impression of being a gruelling assignment as the States, over the years, have evidently and considerably showed remoteness vis-à-vis the commoner. The centralised temperament of Indian parliamentary government has been a foremost inadequacy at the political plane. Even though a federal state, the privileges of the federating components are very frail and are profoundly under the control of the Central Government. It is for this rationale that the Constitution of India has been expressed to be a quasi-federation.

The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments, 1992 have driven in a colossal practice of political decentralisation in India, despite that what is left of the actuality is that these amendments made to the Constitution of India have only facilitated the State legislatures to endorse the range and possibilities of tangible devolution of power and authority to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Urban Local Governments in India.
Occurrences have shown time and again that the State Governments in India have been exceedingly tight-fisted in suitable devolution and decentralisation of powers, authority and resources to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Urban Local Governments.

It has been a conventional attitude and a time-honoured premise that the end-user has got to be included and drawn in the decision-making practice at the most minuscule level of the administrative arrangement if we are to bring to fruition the harvest of democracy. Imparting knowledge on democratic decentralisation in extreme areas of expediency envisions the involvement of all segments of the populace in the decision making engagements, political and fiscal self-sufficiency of the decentralised governments above and beyond, amalgamation of decentralised bodies in the state as well as the national scheme of plan preparation, the procedures involved and executing it. In this perspective, political decentralisation connects to policy formulation of the required strategies, in which the people and their elected representatives collectively put together stratagem and determine the processes to go about it. The current gush of the information and models of local governance arrangements is coalescing both managerial and opinionated decentralisation. However they could take place singly or simultaneously.

Political decentralisation dredges up an overwhelming awareness of the significance of the involvement of the stakeholders and contribution of the community thereby raising to prominence the position of consumers and the people in general. According to the Human Development Report 1993, where decentralisation takes place, it has often been quite successful, encouraging local participation, increasing accountability of local officials,
reducing costs and increasing efficiency. When the end-user chips in with active involvement and participation through political decentralisation, it has often been acknowledged as a universal remedy for the inconveniences that occur due to infrastructural insufficiency in urban centres. A case is made out that the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 enables the urban local governments to embark on scheduling plans and enlarging the development responsibilities as also drum up resources for infrastructural investments.

In a democratic setting, the community is absolute and every bit of strength and supremacy well up from the cascade of this source of sovereignty. Founded on subsidiarity, the community fashions the seats of power at the local, district, state and central level keeping hold of the wherewithal, power and functions at each level, which can be best, tackled at that level. They furnish authorisation to their elected representatives to transact only with issues of the government to which they get elected and not to get in the way of a lower ranking seat of government except for a broad synchronisation effect. The people ensure that the governments include them in the decision-making procedures and perform under their relentless scrutiny under appropriately established participatory planning and transparency directives. So the population as the absolute have the innate entitlement to revise the instrument of government, regulations and course of actions. The devices of recall and referendum can be utilised if the elected representatives do not respond to the urgency of the situations.

People's participation can be accomplished in a democratic setting through popular participation in various plan processes and a genuine inclination towards transparency in governance. Such an approach
facilitates the research and a proper analysis of socio-economic structure of the end-group in view, the infrastructural facilities and the environmental assets holistically and methodically with complete involvement of the end-user, which make it possible for the individual to articulate the desires and hopes. The transparency rules and regulations give power to the populace to entree information from the community bureaus and to play a part in decision-making on proposed assignments through the devices of obligatory public hearings and conferences at those sites that have been the location of such schemes and plans.

In recent times expressions such as “governance” and “good governance” are being progressively brought into usage in creative writing. Appalling governance is all the time more being considered as one of the source of tribulations contained in our social order. Good governance is progressively becoming the bottom line of the aid and loans coming from chief contributors and international organisations. The perception of “governance” is not getting any younger; it is as old as human civilisation. Minimally put, “governance” instruments and the manner of decision-making and the procedures by which decisions are put into action are in focus. Governance can be put into operation in a number of situates and expressions such as company management, countrywide governance and neighbourhood governance.

Given that governance is the technique of decision-making and it engages the procedures which puts government’s announcements into operation, a study of governance spotlights on the official and unofficial actors concerned in decision-making and executing the decisions made and the official and unofficial arrangements that have been established to
decide and implement them. State is one among the many actors involved in the process of governance. Other actors keep on changing depending on the intensity of the issue and the echelon of the government that is under dialogue. The urban context is much more intricate and multifaceted in comparison to the rural setting. In urban locales, there are actors such as ordered crime consortiums, which very frequently manipulate decision-making processes. (Ref: Fig 1) presents the interconnectivity among the actors drawn in urban governance.

![Good Governance Diagram](image-url)

**Fig-1**

Good governance has eight crucial traits. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, it is answerable to the electorate (i.e. accountable), the administrative set up is crystal-clear (i.e. transparent), the administrative arrangement is approachable (i.e. responsive), it is a resourceful and
functional arrangement (i.e. effective and efficient), it is unbiased and all-encompassing (i.e. equitable and inclusive) and it pursues the rule of law. Good governance vouch to diminish corruption, the observations of the insignificant and the marginal groups are taken into consideration and the say so of the generally defenceless segments in the social order are accepted in decision-making. It is also quick to respond to the current and potential requirements of society. Involvement of both men and women is a key input in good governance, which could be either direct participation or through lawful intermediary establishments of the elected representatives. It is imperative to point out that indirect democracy does not essentially typifies that the apprehensions of the most susceptible people would be taken into consideration and deliberated upon in decision-making processes. Participation requires to be clued-up and controlled, which relates to independence to form alliances and articulate opinions on matters of general and specific concerns on the one hand and building up of structured civil society net work on the other hand.

Enhancing governance is conceivably the greatest confront for many countries around the globe, in that the core reasons of woes of the population as well as the competence of the state to kick off, put into practice and enlarge on responses that are reliant on it. Several states and urban authorities will have to toil to encounter the norms of good governance (Ref: Fig 2). Notwithstanding hopefulness engendered by some accomplishments in a few exemplary conurbations, additional operative governance has not happened as expected in several other neighbourhoods because of a deficiency of decentralisation of power and authority, a scrappy bureaucracy and a fragile dedication to community participation. In order to transact with these limitations successfully, the
The Urban Elite
Shapes the city, formally and informally
is well organised

The Urban
Mldle Class
- uniformed
- uninterested
- disorganised
but has the greatest
potential to bring
about change

The Urban Poor
suffer the most
exploited but
beginning to get
organised

Must be strengthened, activated and given space
so as to empower them

Diagram -2

Courtesy: http://www.tugi.apdhp.net
political course of action requires being further participatory. Therefore accordingly there is a requirement to manipulate the mounting public wakefulness on various concerns, pluralisation of administrative trends, and democratisation movements. The participatory component of good governance is noteworthy in that it facilitates built-in methodologies to crack administrative and financial dilemmas that are to be set off in the neighbourhood. Native and neighbourhood supported efforts have the benefits of being more reasonably priced resource needs, uncomplicated organisational arrangements and superior elasticity in organisational actions and decision-making processes. The question is how to commence neighbourhood efforts and yet be competent enough to situate these efforts within an extensive circumstance of an integrated approach where every indigenous effort harmonises with the other.

An interconnected issue is how to pace up decentralisation of power (linking self-sufficiency of urban local governments and legal alterations in decision-making) and simultaneously hastening capacity enhancement in carrying out fresh tasks. Taking up this challenge is momentous, seeing that inter-sector collaboration has not been established to be trouble-free to make the first move and continue at local levels.

Fortification of local self-governance and a reallocation from thoroughly unbending tasks to facilitating roles is indispensable to promote involvement of other strategic actors in the management of the neighbourhood. Public-private collaboration in the management of urban basic services thrives only where local governments have the required competence for good governance. For example from occurrences in developing world of private sector taking part in solid waste managements,
it has been found to be pragmatic that there should be transparency and responsibility in the arrangements. Local governments have to have proficient, skilled personnel and the independence to sign up multi-year contracts that secure economies of scale as well as competence.

4.3: The Effects of Political Decentralisation and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation:

4.3.1: The Guwahati Municipal Corporation wards:

Wards are the rudimentary divisions of a region or a municipality that are established for electoral as well as managerial practicability. In India the current organisation of a city or a town perceive dividing an area into minor and more controllable units, and they are known as wards. Therefore wards are the basic political units of the elected representatives of the urban local governments. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation was established in the year 1973 vide Government notification No: the Gauhati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969. (Notification is placed at Annexure-I). The Act under Section 42 provides for constitution of the Corporation. Section 43 of the Act provides for delimitation of wards for election of councillors as per requirements and alters the area and the number of wards in Guwahati as and when required by the Government of Assam. In minor and average sized urban local governments, the standard number of population for each ward fluctuates from 1500 to 6000. In larger cities, conversely, average sizes of wards may be reasonably larger ranging from a population of 30,000 to even 2 lakhs. This mammoth population in the urban areas has in fact augmented the social and psychological detachment and has produced a crisis of accessibility to our elected representatives. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation realm was divided into 34 wards and election of councillors were conducted for all
the 34 wards in the years of 1971 and 1974. At one time, the area of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was 215 sq. km and the population was only 2.71 lakhs as per Census of 1971. As no census operation took place in 1981, the records of population living within the Guwahati Municipal Corporation areas are not available for that period. However, the estimated figure, stood at not less than 5 lakhs. The census population of the city in 1991 was 5,77,591. Total population of Guwahati city as on 2001 census (provisional) 8,08,021. At present the Corporation has an area of 216 sq.km. With the expansion of the city of Guwahati, the number of wards increased from 34 to 60 in the year 2003 (The Details of the Wards may be seen at Annexure-II)

4.3.2: The Ward Committees:

The 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 provides for creating Ward and other committees by virtue of which the neighbourhood committees can be established as constitutional neighbourhood government. The provisions to set up Ward Committees happened from the proposal that there is a requirement to bridge the fissure between the elected representatives and his/her body of voters and by this means engage in a helpful role at the “Mohalla” and the “para” level in the distribution of urban basic services. So to accelerate the progression of political decentralisation of urban local governments, the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 has made obligatory provisions for the creation of Ward Committees in municipalities having a population of three lakhs or more. The Act also gives power to the legislature of a State of the Indian Union to formulate by law, requirements with regard to the organisation and the locale of a Ward Committee and the style in which the seats and in
the Wards Committees shall be occupied. The 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 provides that a member of a municipality who is a representative of a ward within the territorial limits of the Ward Committees shall be a member of that Committee. A Ward Committee comprise of one or more wards but not higher than four wards. The members of the Ward Committee are included from a variety of groups such as residents associations, doctors, teachers and people belonging to other professions. The Ward Committee will congregate no less than once in a period of three months. It will plan and oversee the improvement of strategies for the ward, promote synchronisation and agreement among assorted clusters, muster amateur labour for social welfare agendas, offer support for spotting recipients of benefits of the development plans connected to the ward. This is above and beyond support in quick collection of taxes, fees, levies and rents. The duration of the Ward Committees shall be for five years. Consequently, the Ward Committees facilitate supplementary decentralisation of power. But under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation so far no Ward Committee has been constituted.

4.3.3: The Ward Elections:

As per Section 50 (1) of the Gauhati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969 provisions have been made for conducting “general elections” with the intention of constituting the Corporation under Section 5.

Article 243 R of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 provides for filling up of the seats in urban local bodies by individuals chosen by direct election from wards as bordered for this purpose. As per Article 243-T seats have to be booked or reserved for individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in every urban local
self-governing institution and the figure of seats set aside is to be the matching proportion of their population to the entire population. It also provides for reservation of the office of the Chairperson in all urban local self-governing bodies for individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and for women as the State legislature may legislate.

The 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 has made radical alterations in the societal structure of India in bringing the powerless and habitually the withdrawn segments of the Indian social order to the frontage of power – both politically and administratively – in having given a large piece of clout and sway in deciding for themselves and slowly but surely leading to elevated echelons of democracy at the local, regional and the national level. The Act has heaved women from their typical and predictable zones of their schedules to the larger world outside to a considerable degree of being in attendance outstandingly among the male folk in the administrative and managerial arrangements and in the neighbourhood dealings and come to grips with them competently.

Till date four general bodies have been voted to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation since its inception in 1974. The general elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation were held in 1974, 1979, and 1995 and in 2003 respectively. But for long periods the Guwahati Municipal Corporation had been under super session by the Government of Assam. (The names of the Councillors are presented at Annexure–I since the first election). The first Mayor of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was the Late Radha Gobinda Barua.

The following table shows the nature of political participation of the 79 respondents who were interviewed about the functioning of the
Guwahati Municipal Corporation. It may be observed from the table that among the respondents only eight percent politicians and one percent of the ex-councillors contested in the last Corporation election. For majority of the respondent’s political participation was confined to only voting followed by campaign and casting of votes. Seven percent of the officers could not vote even by postal ballot due their busy election schedule while eight percent of the journalists could not vote.

Table – 4.3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Political Participation by the Respondents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sl No</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex counsellors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

The Constitution of India provides for elections to the urban local governments compulsory every five years. Subsequently, although elections have been conducted in most of the states in India where the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 is valid, the predicament, however crops up with respect to conducting them on a regular basis. Although the Constitution of India provides timely elections to be held compulsorily, concerns with regard to reservation and delimitation of wards have time and again been alluded to as an explanation for pushing back elections. It is an attention-grabbing situation wherein the constitutional provision of
conducling regular elections has resisted judicial enquiry also. The Supreme Court of India in its judgment [(WP (C) no. 719 of 1995] clearly settled that Articles 243E and 243U on elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Governments respectively are not discretionary/optional but mandatory/compulsory. It is also assured that deferment of elections is a contravention of the Constitution of India except when there are supervening complications such as natural catastrophes like floods, earthquakes, cyclones etc. It is therefore imperative that both the Central and State Governments in India have to see to it that elections are conducted prior to the expiration of the five-year tenure of the municipalities as desired by the Constitution of India.

Out of the four general elections held to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, the second general election was conducted after an interval of five years in 1979. But after 1979 the next i.e. the third general election were held in 1995 i.e. after a gap of a sickening 16 years and the fourth general election was held in 2003 after a gap of another agonizing eight years. The history of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has been marked by unsavoury long years of suppressions throwing all norms of democratic decentralisation to the winds.

4.3.4 The details of the general elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation:

The first two elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation were conducted by the Commissioner of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation under the direction of the Government of Assam. But the third and the fourth elections were conducted after the enactment of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 and as per the provisions of the said
The first election to Guwahati Municipal Corporation was held on 27.01 1974. It was held in 33 wards except in ward no. 20 where election was not held due to a High Court injunction. There were 132 candidates in fray. The Congress had fielded 29; its ally the Communist Party of India fielded five candidates. The other six left parties, which had fielded their candidates, were the Communist Party Marxist, RCPI, RSP, PDP, Socialist Party and SUCI (Tribune January 24, 1974).

The Congress fielded the likes of Radha Gobinda Barua, Robin Nobis, Bhaben Choudhury, Kshirada Kanta Bishaya, Balen Ram Phukan. The opposition consisted of individuals like Lakshyadhar Choudhury, Saroj Kumar Sen Gupta. Except the Congress no other political parties had issued any poll manifesto, there were 127 booths in 33 wards (Tribune, January 26 1974). About 55 percent of votes were cast. Polling started in a bright weather amidst scenes of enthusiasm particularly of the women. The women voters in some wards were the first to arrive at the booths and in many wards they acted as agents for different candidates. Ward-wise highest polling of 78 percent was claimed at ward 31 and 74 percent was reported from ward nos. four and five. The highest percentage of 80.5 was polled in a booth at Bamunimaidan (Public Health Office) of ward 29 where on an average 65 percentage of 2400 votes were cast. The total number of voters in the city is around one lakh (Tribune January 28, 1974).

In the first general election to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation there were 11 winners from the Congress, three from the Communist Party of India, two from the Communist Party Marxist, one from the Socialist Party
and 16 from among the Independent candidates. An Independent candidate Parbati Prasad Goswami polled the highest number of votes (Tribune January 30, 1974)

Table: 4.3.4A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI NO</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Nos of Candidates elected</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>14.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Revolutionary Socialist Party</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compiled from Data available in the Assam Tribune, Jan 30 1974

The Independent and the councillors belonging to political parties other than the Congress formed the Progressive Front (Tribune February 4, 1974). Radha Gobinda Barua, a councillor on a Congress ticket resigned on the 12th of February 1974 and he expressed his wish to work in close co-operation with the Progressive Front (Tribune 13, 1974), which consisted of 17 Independent councillors, two councillors from the Communist Party Marxist and one from the Socialist Party.

In all, there were seven political parties that had taken part in the first general elections of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, the total number of independent candidates were 86, however they cannot be called really independent of any political party. Total nominations were 150 and none of them were rejected; however 18 withdrew before the prescribed date and Smt. Renuka Devi Barkataki was one among them. There were three women contestants in fray, Smt. Meera Jalil of the Congress, Smt. Kunti Devi and Smt. Nalini Baruah both Independents, all of them were
routed. Total votes polled were 96,000, valid votes were 57,894 which was roughly 60 percent, actual votes were 59,314 and 1420 votes were wasted.

The votes polled by the Political Parties are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI NO</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Nos of Votes Polled</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>16263</td>
<td>28.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
<td>03071</td>
<td>05.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>02717</td>
<td>04.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>01965</td>
<td>03.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Revolutionary Socialist Party</td>
<td>00755</td>
<td>01.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>RCPI</td>
<td>00520</td>
<td>00.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SUCI</td>
<td>00250</td>
<td>00.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>32353</td>
<td>55.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57894</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Data available in the Assam Tribune, Jan 30 1974

Radha Gobinda Barua was the first Mayor of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and Govinda Kalita of the Communist Party of India was the first Deputy Mayor (The Assam Tribune, Guwahati, Saturday, February 16, 1974). The first meeting of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was held on Wednesday, February 22, 1974.

The Second General Election to the Corporation:

The second elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation were held on February 24, 1979. There were in all 183 contestants of which four were women. Janata Party had fielded as many as 183 candidates and there were 102 Independent candidates. The Congress had set up no official candidates but many of them had contested the election in their individual capacities. 50 percent of the Guwahatians had voted and highest polling
was reported from Fancy Bazar and Garigaon areas. However the results of the second general election to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation remained inconclusive as no single party could secure absolute majority. The Communist Party of India Marxist secured the highest number of 12 seats; this also included two Communist Party of India Marxist-supported Independent candidates. The Assam Jatiatabadi Dal secured five seats, the Janata Party got six seats, the Congress got two seats and there were eight victorious Independent candidates.

Table: 4.3.4C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI NO</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Nos of Candidates elected</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communist Party Marxist</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Janata Party</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Independent (Jatiyotabadi Dal)</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>11.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Data available in the Assam Tribune, February 25, 1979

Benoy Bhusan Choudhury, a Communist Party Marxist supported Independent councillor was the Mayor and Girin Baruah a councillor of the Assam Jatiatabadi Dal was the Deputy Mayor.

The Third General Election of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation

The State Election Commission announced that the third election to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would be held on May 16 1995. The date of election notification was 17.04.1995. There were 405 contestants for 59 wards. In Ward 3 Independent candidate Jyoti Das was declared
The Congress and the Axom Gana Parishad had fielded 59 contestants, the Bharatiya Janata Party fielded 54 candidates, the Communist Party Marxist fielded 11 candidates and the Communist Party of India fielded only one candidate however there were 11 Independent candidates in the electoral fray. The Guwahati 'Basir Aikya Mancha (Unity Forum), a conglomerate of opposition parties had fielded 42 candidates. The total number of voters in the 60 wards was 3, 32, 077, in Ward 7 the number of voters were the highest i.e. 9,971 and in Ward 43 it was the lowest at 2, 230. 20 seats were reserved for women, four for the Scheduled Castes and two for the Scheduled Tribes. Braving inclement weather 55 percent of the Guwahatians had exercised their right to adult franchise. The Axom Gana Parishad had emerged as the single largest party bagging 22 seats, the Congress secured 21 seats. Repoll was ordered in Wards 2 and 10 to be held on Sunday the 21st May 1995. The Bharatiya Janata Party had secured nine seats. The results of repelling in Wards 2 and 10 made the Axom Gana Parishad and the Congress tied at 23 seats each. Sri Govinda Thakuria (Congress) in Ward 10 won over his Axom Gana Parishad rival by a mere 22 votes. Sri Nabakumar Kumar (Axom Gana Parishad) in Ward 2 won over a margin of 122 votes over his Congress rival. Total valid votes were 18, 7048. The Congress had polled the highest number of 54,032 of the total valid votes; this is around 29 percent of the total. The Axom Gana Parishad polled 46,139 votes i.e. 25 percent of the total valid votes and the Bharatiya Janata Party polled 36, 841 votes i.e. over 19 percent of the total valid votes. Another notable feature of the results of the second Guwahati Municipal Corporation election was people’s refusal to vote for the Guwahati Basir Aikya Mancha (Unity Forum). However political observers felt that the Guwahati Basir Aikya Mancha (Unity
Forum) was not a true platform of the Opposition Parties. Barring the Janata Dal and the Congress (S) all the opposition parties stayed away from the Mancha. Guwahati Basir Aikya Mancha (Unity Forum) had failed to secure a single seat and in some seats was disastrous.

Table: 4.3.4D
Party Position in the Third Guwahati Municipal Corporation Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI NO</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Nos of Candidates elected</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communist Party Marxist</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>01.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janta Party</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>08.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Axom Gana Parishad</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Data available in the Assam Tribune, May 18, 1995

Dr. Hemoprova Saikia (Congress I) and Sri Abir Patra (Congress I) bagged the posts of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Dr. Hemoprova Saikia became the first lady Mayor of Guwahati. She became the fourth mayor of Guwahati. Radha Gobinda Baruah was the first Mayor of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation established in 1974. Sri. Lakhshyadhar Choudhury was elected in 1975 but he could not complete his term as the Sarat Chandra Sinha Government suspended the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Sri Benoy Bhusan Chowdhury assumed office in 1979 but he too faced a similar fate when the Government of Assam superseded the Guwahati Municipal Corporation in 1982 before the completion of its term.
4.3.5: Women participation in local politics:

As a rule women are considered to engage in less important roles in the social order in most parts of the world. The predicament in women’s advancement is the restructuring of the current asymmetrical power relationships between the males and females of the world. Males manipulate both in and outside their residence and when they work with women in local self-governing bodies in which females have a lawful standing of power; they have a propensity to keep them out or discount the consideration of the women.

It has been a tight rope walking for women since they look up positions of control in local bodies. They were being sandwiched by two important actors from two directions – on the one side, by the political party that backed them and on the other side by women’s organisations, which expect and holler for justice. Adding up to this, entire there was the anxiety at home, principally in those cases where their husbands and family members were unaccommodating of their community responsibilities. Political parties have infrequently been encouraging to women contenders and have been unsympathetic to women’s causes. Party briefings and the freedom of choice of women elected representatives regularly have come to conflict, Czech women are reported to be not interested in “the extremist political attitudes where there is a right wing and left wing and nothing in between.”

If women are not drawn in decision-making and policy formulation procedures at various echelons of power, modifications in women’s political and to some degree social and economic standing will persist to be insignificant. Since early part of 1990’s, mostly after the Beijing
Conference on Women and Development and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat-II), women's role in local, regional and national political courses of action has been extensively mused over all throughout. Furthermore, the Beijing+5 and Istanbul+5 appraisals acknowledged women and politics and women and local self-governance as key crosscutting themes. Political life at the local governance level is at relative ease and here there are possibilities for women to gain admittance without much difficulty, as the expenses of escalating election campaigning are comparatively low and problems and concerns at the neighbourhood level have a propensity to encourage women to cross the threshold of political affairs. Furthermore, local self-governing bodies are good preparation pedestal for women in politics who desire to attain higher echelons of the power structure in the government. But now that the woman has turned up into the political turf, men commonly, and the officialdom specifically, are both finding it knotty to transact with them. So far they have worked with other men. The entrance of women has led to the emergence of many arguments on their capabilities to accomplish in public offices particularly at the local level institutions. Many doubt their abilities to pull off much because they would believe that it is in fact the male kin who are in reality taking the benefit of the positions held by the woman councillor and the women are not allowed to perform on their own. Even the establishment considers the male next of kin of the woman elected representative's family as factual elected member. The inconveniences that women face in the urban milieu are all interconnected. The conditions of subsistence of the low-income women are insanitary and their concerns are apt to ailments and they confront a larger hazard of dying premature in life they are suppressed psychologically and culturally too. Household liabilities and want for basic
education make them uninformed of the thriving prospects. Societal proscriptions habitually stop them from delving into income-generating possibilities, which are subjugated by the males. They are compelled to depend on the men and are systematically barred from decision-making. The complete improvement the nation is not achievable unless we strap up the capabilities of the silent half of the populace. Societal security, equal opportunities for women and economic potential cannot be realised unless the women are brought into the natural processes. It entails establishment of an accommodating and a congruent society without unfairness. Thus municipal procedures need to appreciate and react favourably to the tasks and responsibilities of the genders, their dissimilar access to and manipulation over resources and decision-making processes and their reciprocal and conflictual requirements and benefits.

Decentralisation is conceivably the most democratic course of action, which imparts possibilities for improved development of women in scheduling and discussion techniques, and also has the promise of a more gender sensitive allotment of local means. Local authorities are closest to their citizens and hence in the best position to involve women in the decision-making process and in consultation. The decentralisation of power and assets is also a vital instrument of enhancing stakeholders' involvement. However, tussle on means at the local level can be uncontrollable and patron-client arrangements occasionally include malfeasance and pork-barrel politics, which may serve more to keep out women more willingly than to support them to enter into the political procedures.
Ever since Independence, owing to the utilisation of their right to vote, the women of India have been opened to the elements of a larger political progression and are staging escalating wakefulness not only about deficiency of civil rights but also their effectiveness. Women become straightforwardly activated in the political course of action by the political parties who habitually move towards women for party concerns and for short-term targets by winning the ballot vote, but not for long-term purposes of generating societal transformations and gender egalitarianism in political power involvement.

In contemporary years, India has been observing reorganisation and restructuring in the perspectives of decentralisation of control from Central/State governments to the local echelons of power, providing the local self-governing bodies with funds corresponding to their allocated duties. Recent state of affairs in India on 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts 1992 bestows foremost position to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Urban Local Governments. There are by now more than 60,000 elected representatives, one-third of them being women.

In the general elections of Guwahati Municipal Corporation, women took part in various ways in the poll processes. But no women were elected in the first and second general election to the Corporation. In the Third election due to reservation of seats for women to the tune of one-third of the total seats i.e. 18 women were elected to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Srimati Hemaprava Saikia of Congress (I) who was an elected representative also became the first lady Mayor of Guwahati Srimati Nilakshi Talukdar (Congress I) was also the Mayor of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation 2005-2006.
4.3.6: Political parties.

Political parties are fundamental to any democratic arrangement and they engage in a more critical task in the electoral procedure – in impressing contestants on the voters and conducting election campaigns. Nevertheless, since the days of India as a newly independent country, the political parties and the establishment of parties in India have been predisposed by miscellaneous movements of ethos, socio-economic, ethnic, community, caste pluralism and religious favouritism. Furthermore traditions of the national struggle for freedom, divergent and paradoxical ways of life of the party leadership and the decisive select few and the variegated but conflicting ideological standpoints have brought about more diversities in an already multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-linguistic country.

Political parties do not as such find any straight reference in the Constitution of India, hence they are also considered to be extra-constitutional. Nevertheless there is solitary provision in the Constitution of India, which is openly pertinent to the operation of political parties: The Tenth Schedule. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India was added by the 52nd Constitution Amendment Act 1985. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India provides for the disqualification of a person for being a member of either House of the Union Parliament [Article 102(2)] or the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State of the Union of India [Art 191(2)] on reasons of defection.

Lack of adequately comprehensive constitutional requirements, the foremost onus of structuring and executing the laws governing political
parties in India has fallen on the Nirvachan Sadan or the Election Commission of India, which is a self-regulating, self-governing and legitimate organisation under the Constitution of India in charge of conducting an assortment of elections in India. This organisation has the decisive authority to accord acknowledgment and category to political parties to the “association of body of citizens of India”. The Election Commission has the supremacy to make a decision whether to enlist an association or body of individuals as a political party.

A similar trend of electoral politics has come to the forefront in the fourth general elections held for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation in 2003. The massive politicking which been witnessed during the third and the fourth general elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was remarkably lesser during the first and second general elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

Currently it is specifically constructive to be reminiscent that political parties can engage in a conspicuous role and undeniably an affirmative responsibility in summatin demands of the voters. In this context the political parties sort through the manifold and rival benefits and pressures of numerous assemblages and associations, they rebargain, rearrange and restructure them zeroing on in broad programmes and information on which constituency members can concur and parties can contend and challenge. In a democratic arrangement articulation is characteristically hostile and amorphous. In the absence of a process of aggregation, manifold articulation can effortlessly nudge one another out and, if ensued by disappointment with consultative procedures, the whole situation could lead to destabilisation of democratic ideals and institutions.
Non-governmental organisations are eloquent about cluster demands, but they cannot impart a cumulative effect on them. For instance on the eve of the fourth general election to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation in December 2003, a common organisation was formed by the name “Nagarik Oikkya Mancha” involving all 60 municipal wards to act as a pressure cum watch group for uplift of socio-civic conditions of the city with special emphasis on improvement of civic amenities which includes identification of civic amenities requiring development repairs and appraisal to concerned authorities, liaison of and assistance to implementing agencies involved in development activities, awareness about the need of public participation, to bring non-adherence of rules, quality, design etc. by implementing agencies into the notice of the authorities, holding of meetings/ demonstrations/ rallies for restoration of public interests and pursuance of any other activities connected with the welfare of the city.

Two very important aspects during the fourth general election of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation held in December 2003 was very much discernible viz. stress was on observance of code of conduct during the elections and a definite bid on part of the State Election Commission to make the Guwahati Municipal Corporation polls transparent. Any citizen could walk up to the Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup Office compound and scrutinise the antecedents of the contestants, this had happened for the first time in the history of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

Amidst the hustle-bustle of the election-preparation, the Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup, who is also the Returning Officer along with the Superintendent of Police, Guwahati City, held several meetings with the
representatives of various political parties like the Indian National Congress (INC), Assam Gana Parishad (AGP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), Communist Party of India-Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML) and Trinamool Gana Parishad (TGP). Such meetings were held to thrash out the model code of conduct to be observed by the candidates and political parties and also to take a stock of the security engagements made for the management of polls in a free, fair and peaceful ambience. Interestingly the contesting candidates were requested to strictly adhere to the ceiling of maximum limit of expenditure of Rs. 10,000 and maintenance of proper accounts to be submitted to the State Election Commission, but the campaign trail says a different story altogether, of pumping in a lot more amount of money into the election campaign.

Every political party in the election tussle had a full platter to focus on. The harrowing state of civic amenities in Guwahati such as washed away city roads due to artificial flash floods, pot holes and water logging of roads, blocked drains, stagnant water channels, stinking garbage dumps at every street corner, sudden traffic snarls without any rhyme or reason, supply of insufficient and foul-smelling drinking water, regular power cuts, encroachment of vacant and open spaces and also over natural water bodies, overloaded and jam-packed city buses, haphazard building constructions flouting building norms, random cutting of hills and obliteration of greenery, ecological mayhem and inaction and indifference of public utility services.

Despite the presence of a large number of basic and smouldering issues upsetting the lives of Guwahatians and a large number of floating
populations of the city, the political parties and their affiliated contestants could hardly relate to the denizens. Important political parties released their "poll manifesto" with much fanfare but providing only the outlines. The contestants in their ‘appeal’ leaflets could not fascinate the public particularly of their respective wards; hardly any of them provided comprehensive agenda for their respective wards taking into consideration the exclusive concerns of the locales. The voters in most cases were embittered and were left without any alternative but to elect those contestants with lesser ills and demerits. The plight of the voters during the municipal corporation election, had been “just like sacrificial goats, dragged to the altar”.

The targets of the political parties were wide-ranging from government land encroachers to the ordinary Guwahatian, trying to persuade the electorate of the city with grand and attractive imaginings and assurance of a dirt-free, environmental-friendly and contamination-free liveable city, overall enhancement of the living circumstances of the city residents, encouraging private sector involvement in water supply arrangements etc.

Infact exceptional enthusiasm and elaboration manifested the wrapping up of the fourth general election in 30 long years of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation but not before the political parties, their affiliated participators and raucous followers got busy in a public show of mudslinging and a mutual finger pointing.

Under such state of affairs, the observation that the medium of local self governing bodies are not spaces for party politicking and never-ending party fall outs is quite appealing and should be given a definite and
positive approach. Election of a small number of appropriate philanthropic individuals supported by conscientious and well thought-out public bodies as whistle-blowers and sentinels of the grassroots; authentic, legitimate interests, unfettered by the viciousness of partisanship is undoubtedly an honest idea that can be proposed.

4.3.7: Campaign methods:

The campaign is the method by which the political parties promote their nominee and point of view with which they anticipate to convince and try wooing individuals to vote for their contenders and parties. And this they do within a stipulated period. Candidates are given a week to put forward their nomination papers. The process of filing nomination papers for the civic polls in Guwahati started on November 3, 2003 and the last date for the same was November 10, 2003. The nomination papers are scrutinised by the Returning Officers and if not found to be in order could be rejected after an instantaneous hearing. Acceptably nominated contestants can pull out within two days after nominations have been pored over. According to the election schedule the date of scrutiny was slated for November 12, 2003 and the last date of withdrawal of nominations was November 15, 2003 for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation election in December 2003. The official campaign lasts at least two weeks from the drawing up of the list of nominated candidates.

4.4: Economic decentralisation:

The Constitution 74th Amendment Act, 1992 provides for continuing decentralisation of development and decision-making operations to the local self-governing bodies and hence the spotlight has been on devolution of powers and authority. This understanding embrace involvement of all
segments of the society in the decision-making procedures, political and fiscal self-sufficiency of the local self-governments and incorporation of decentralised establishments into the state / national system of development and execution of the plans acknowledging the subordinate spatial level and local planning bureaus. Thus envisaged municipal decentralisation is an instrument of alteration, reallocation or rearrangement of inhabitants, city functions and actions predominantly done by persons, official or unofficial involvement in the structured and non-structured zones of the urban economy.

Direct local democracy has been authorised by the Constitution of India through the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992. The said amendment also grants for preparing the groundwork of district and municipal improvement strategies. The organisation of such plans, which amalgamate reserves and their spatial connotations, necessitates inclusive participatory plan procedures. With globalisation, fiscal liberalisation and substantial political decentralisation of the local self-governance, there is an emergent demand of professionals, who would be accessible and offer services to the local desires and aspirations and to operate as a linkage connecting the local self governing bodies and the stakeholders.

The fundamental component required for financial decentralisation, is having access to healthy and sufficient funding. The vigour of the fund requires being adequately robust to engage in decentralised pecuniary performances. The Gauhati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969 affords a Municipal Fund (Sec 110) wherein all types of receipts are deposited. The Act provides detailed guidelines about the procedures to be followed in depositing and accessing the fund. In Chapter three, it has already been
discussed in details. Various subjects have been entrusted to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation under the schemes of decentralisation. In the succeeding paragraphs it will be explored how far the decentralisation arrangement has been successful and simultaneously at what rate the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has been functioning in the economic sphere.

4.4.1: Infrastructures raised by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation:

Currently it is an acknowledged estimation that with the blitz of urbanisation, the insistence on urban basic services and establishment of urban utilities and infrastructures has become intense. It therefore falls on the urban local authorities to make available municipal infrastructural amenities and other civic facilities and services commensurating with the locale. The disorganised expansion of Guwahati has made it a Herculean assignment to sustain even the barest level of the assorted urban basic services. Further, speaking of Guwahati, the galloping swell of inhabitants and the supplementary demands of a substantial floating population daily have brought considerable modifications in the existing urban infrastructures.

(a) Roads:

There are different bureaus to construct and look after the roads, streets, lanes and bye lanes within the Guwahati Municipal Corporation area. But the major percentage of roads are constructed and maintained by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

The present area of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation is approximately 216 square kilometres. The city's total road network covers
approximately 725 kms, which includes 512 kms of roads maintained by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and the rest are maintained by Public Works Department of the Government of Assam and the Indian Railways. The total number of roads is 2270 and the number is rising with the enlargement of the city.

### Table – 4.4.1A

**Roads under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Type Of Road</th>
<th>Length (In Km)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Black Topped</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>35.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gravelled</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>26.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kacha Road</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>37.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Guwahati Municipal Corporation

The table- 4.4.1 (a) shows that of the total 512 kilometre roads managed by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, includes 191 kms comprising of 37.30 percent of *kaccha* roads and 183 kms comprising of 35.74 percent of blacktopped roads. The length of roads/ streets is not proportionate to the requirement of this fast expanding metropolis. Interviews with the first set of respondents’ reveal the following drawbacks of the roads, which are serialised as per the first preference.

### Table – 4.4.1B

**Citizen’s opinion about the status of the GMC Roads**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation of the Respondents</th>
<th>Lack of pavement</th>
<th>Unscientific blacktopping</th>
<th>Dangerously decayed</th>
<th>No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>06%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>04%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex councillors</td>
<td>08%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Fieldwork
It may be observed from the table above that unscientific blacktopping is the primary complain of almost all categories of respondents followed by roads not maintained or dangerously decayed.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation officials have admitted during the interviews that due to paucity of funds in some localities, roads have not been repaired for periods as long as seven years. On the other hand though the city requires 200 millimetres thick bituminous courses, the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam has been able to provide only 20 millimetres open graded surfacing because of financial crunch. The premier city of the North East now has to put up with 3600 macadamised roads and lanes and there are less than 1000 roads and lanes in good condition i.e. without potholes and craters.

The report of the survey by the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam (City Roads Division: 2003) states that heavy pressure of vehicular traffic has taken its toll on the major arteries of Guwahati and what we need now is the immediate widening of roads and lanes including the Gopinath Bordoloi Road at Chandmari, Radha Gobinda Barua Road, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road, Ganeshguri Road and the Kahilipara road.

Very recently since December 2003, the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) had taken up 250 road projects in the city worth Rs 22 crore under the first phase of the scheme of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation the deadline as 31st of March, 2004 but heavy rains hit the completion of the road project. However the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) could complete only 100 projects while
150 projects remained half done. The National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) has also taken up the task of repairing some old roads. Nevertheless the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was planning to allot the second phase of roads to the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC). Each ward of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would be allotted three roads. Besides the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would allot construction of as may as 3600 lanes and bye lanes in a phased manner. Such projects are aimed at easing the burden on the existing network of roads in Guwahati.

In spite of the fact that Guwahati is on a beautification campaign, so far the efforts have been concentrated only in a small zone – while the remaining parts of the city continues to suffer in silence. In sharp contrast to Guwahati Shillong Road and Radha Gobinda Barua Road, which were given a facelift ahead of the India-ASEAN Car Rally in November 2004, other busy roads like Lokhra Road, Dispur-Kahilipara Road, Chatribari Road, Bishnupur Road; Bani Kanta Kakati Road etc. are in a sorry state. The main factors to blame are many: poor quality of road construction, improper maintenance and mismanagement of funds, including inability to optimally utilise central allocations etc.

National Building Construction Company (NBCC) is constructing 165 new roads and repairing several old ones. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation has submitted proposal to construct 300 additional roads to ease burden of vehicular traffic on the existing network of roads. The amount required for maintenance of roads in Guwahati is Rupee 30 crore per annum. But the budget allocation to the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam for road maintenance is Rupees 20.00 crore.
Rupees 35 crore proposal for repairing the Lokhra Road and Dispur-Kahilipara Road is awaiting permission of the Central Department of the Development of the North-East Region (DoNER) for over a year. Another Rupees 23 crore proposal for repairing the Fatasil-Ambari Road is also pending with the Urban Development Ministry.

**Table – 4.4.1C**

Citizen’s opinion about the Major problems of the city

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation of the Respondents</th>
<th>Problem of Drainage &amp; Water logging</th>
<th>Problem of Garbage</th>
<th>Problem of Water supply</th>
<th>Inadequate Road capacity</th>
<th>Problem of Roadside Toilets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-councillors</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

The above table makes it amply clear that problem of drainage and the resultant water logging caused by the rainwater in the city happens to be the most burning problem of the city. Absence of scientific sewerage and drainage system adds to deterioration of environment of Guwahati. The city has mostly open drains, which are without proper gradient and as such during rains; they overflow making it appalling to negotiate the roads. The hassles are multiple. Rains in catchments such as Khasi hills; the over flooding of the river Brahmaputra adds to the woes; some portions of the city are so low that the rainwater simply submerge these areas due to the absence of a proper drainage system. Besides massive encroachments along the Bharalu River and incredible deforestation of the hills and
mounds surrounding Guwahati and extensive earth-cutting multiply to the water logging menace every year.

The Guwahati Metropolitan Area Storm Drainage Improvement Programme, an all-inclusive assignment aimed at improving and further reinforcing the drainage arrangement within Guwahati Metropolitan Area was formally launched on December 6, 1999. It visualised improvement of storm water basins, natural drainage waterways, construction of drains, sluice structures and crossings over the Bharalu rivulet and Mora Bharalu strait.

However, another noteworthy project sponsored by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)- Storm Drainage Project was shelved midway during 2003-2004. Another such project costing about Rupees 52.48 crore storm water drainage scheme could not be completed due flaws in the project after 88 percent of the work was completed and Rupees 39.33 crore spent. Other miscellaneous projects taken up to improve the living conditions of the Guwahatians over the years in this context can be listed as follows:

- Development of Borsala Beel and its conservation and improvement as storm water pools and ecological open space.

- Improvement of roads, drains and streetlights in various Harijan settlements within the city area.

- Restoration of the drains at Islampur-Gandhibasti Main Road.

- Ward-wise repairing the construction of drains and roads by the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam.
(c). Water supply system:

The necessity for providing potable water for consumption, increasing and recuperating sanitary conveniences in urban locales have been restated in successive plans of the Government of India. The Basic Minimum Services Programme introduced in 1996 aimed at supplying safe drinking water to 100 percent of the urban population by the year 2000. Although the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation is the prime responsibility of State Governments and more particularly the local self-governing bodies, the Government of India has been acting as an add-on to these efforts through agendas such as the Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP). In fact water and sanitation are two indivisible urban basic facilities but regrettably 70 percent of surface water resources in India put up with pollution due to diverse reasons. Domestic and urban sewage contribute to 90 percent of this pollution. Poor sanitation and unclean water is to be blamed for the spread of communicable sickness. In India only 29 percent of the population have access to sanitation and only 217 of the 3768 towns have sewage treatment facilities. Predominantly industrial and urban effluents run down the levels of oxygen in the river, jeopardize aquatic life and cause water unsuitable for human consumption. This has resulted in serious reduction of drinking water supply all over India. There is calamitous need of setting up water purification amenities, water reprocessing and treatment installations, upgrading drainage and sewerage together with doing the groundwork and executing river/ water bodies’ renewal schemes need it be with the cooperation and in coordination of private bureaus at various levels of schemes and campaign implementation.
And so the situation and the state of affairs as far as drinking water supply and drainage and sewerage maintenance in Guwahati is concerned, it is not much different from other towns and cities of India. Despite the fact that the mighty Red River, the Brahmaputra is flowing along Guwahati, insufficient drinking water is a major dilemma of the residents of Guwahati. Till date around 70 percent of the city-dweller go without drinking water due to the obvious reasons. Total water connections are 22000 (Guwahati Municipal Corporation, 2001) (Source: Guwahati Municipal Corporation, 2001). In addition to these projects, there are eight deep tube wells and 560 hand pumps supplying water to the various localities. Areas like Refinery Colonies, Railway Colonies and Capital Complex have separate arrangements for the supply of water. In Guwahati the water supply scheme has been in execution since 1887. In the pre-independence period, there was incessant water supply throughout the day. Later water supply was shortened to the mornings and evenings. This has been further reduced to the morning supply only. In certain areas of the city the residents face immense privations, due to water insufficiency, besides water supply is very irregular. Some times certain wards do not get water for days at a stretch. Those who do not have access to the municipality water have to depend on their own resource like tube wells, boring arrangements and fend for them.

Currently, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation operates three plants- i) Panbazar Paani Tanky, ii) Saatpukhuri and iii) Kamakhya. The one at Panbazar Paani Tanky was commissioned in 1960 and has a capacity to treat 10 million gallons of water daily. The Saatpukhuri Water Supply Project of 1985 possesses the capacity of another five million gallons per day, while the Kamakhya Water Supply Project of 2000 can
treat one million gallons a day. But the water being treated and supplied by these installations is much less than their installed capacity. According to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation sources, myriad causes have set up blockages in the inept supply of drinking water in Guwahati. The number of pumps lying inoperative owing to depreciation has significantly slowed down the Guwahati Municipal Corporation’s capacity to transfer water to its plants. The official report says that the Guwahati Municipal Corporation does not have the required resources to go for a revamping of the pumps. In 2002, it was estimated that the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would require about Rupees. 70 lakhs for a comprehensive refurbishment of the pumping system (Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Official Report, 2002). Keeping in mind mounting costs, it would be close to a crore rupees, if such a manoeuvre were carried out at present.

Ever since its commencement, the functioning of the Assam Urban Water And Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) popularly known as the “Urban Water Supply” has botched miserably in providing regular supply of quality water in Guwahati. Currently, the Assam Urban Water and Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) generate 12.6 million litres per day (MLD) that is supplied to around 8,000 families. The Assam Urban Water And Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) along with the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and the Public Health Engineering Department supplies only 92 million litres against a demand of 140 million litres per day (MLD). The Guwahati Municipal Corporation supplies 72 million litres of water a day, catering to 30 percent of the needs of city’s populace. The Assam Urban Water And Sewerage Board’s Zoo Road (Radha Gobinda Barua Road) Water Supply Scheme of 1988 cover areas like Hengrabari,
Sarumotoria, Rukmini Gaon, Rupnagar and Jatia. In Guwahati most areas put up with acute deficiency of water and the problem is critical in thickly populated areas like Gandhibasti, Lachitnagar, Pub-Sarania, Bhaskar Nagar, Zoo Road, parts of Chandmari, Hatigarh, Sarumotoria, Anil Nagar, Kumarpara, Noonmati, Uzanbazar, Rehabari, Kalapahar, Barsapara, Odalbakra etc.

The slapdash expansion of the city together with burgeoning of concrete constructions of all types has also challenged the supply network of drinking water. At quite a few places, construction works or traffic gets in the way of repair work of the pipes. Some pipelines are suppressed in the roads and other constructions and they have built-up clefts and snaps due to uninterrupted force of vehicular traffic, above and beyond loss of water, polluted water percolate into these pipes delivering drinking water. On the other hand the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has already alerted that unwarranted utilisation of ground water through boring and digging wells and tube wells have resulted in a severe plummet in the water table.

Nevertheless for enhancement of water works a number of minor projects had been undertaken in the recent past within Guwahati. These are:

1) Water supply to the B.T.College, Lachitnagar, Pension Para, Saniram Bora Road localities have been restored by modification of distribution pipelines.

2) Substitution of old pipes at Ulubari and Kachari basti areas.

3) Commissioning of new 350-millimetre dia pumping main to housing reservoir from Santipur Treatment Installation etc.
But the key obstruction is a colossal fiscal crisis in their implementation and therefore no new project has been undertaken to decipher the problem.

However, finally the Government of Assam had announced a Rupees six crore project to supplement the existing deficient water supply arrangement of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The scheme would be financed from the non-lapsable central pool of resources. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation had sent a comprehensive statement on the project to the Government of Assam in mid October 2004 for proposing it to Development of the North-East Region (DoNER). The assignment is intended to alleviate the existing arrangement for habitual, sufficient and superior water including the acquisition of new generators and conclusion of the process of repairing the pumps. The water crisis at Guwahati can be attributed to the disregard of the existing system.

The water supply procedure has got numerous components and insufficiency of potable drinking water is just one of them. One very grave problem in this regard is the Assam State Electricity Board’s (ASEB) on and off threat to sever connections of power supply to all installations operated by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation over the latter’s unpaid electricity bills amounting to a whopping Rupees 70 crore. However, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation sources say that the Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) too owes Rupees 32 lakhs to the civic body as water supply dues but the Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) is not interested to subtract the amount due to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The Assam State Electricity Board
ASEB) officials emphasise that re-establishment of power supply was very provisional and may be rescinded anytime.

A sizeable segment of the population of Guwahati rely on private water provider to tide over their daily predicament about safe drinking water. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation had allotted the household supply of water through tankers to a private company. The suppliers buy the water from the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and retail the water to the user for Rupees 350/- only per tanker. Each tanker contains 3000 litres. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation sells water at Rupees 30/- only per 1000 litres to the private party. But the city residents make a protest that water tankers do not contain the fixed capacity often leading to altercations. Sources say that more than the suppliers it is usually the staffs that tamper with the quantity. The tankers sell a small quantity of water at different roadside stalls and the fast food points in the city on their way to deliver the water to the consumers and charge Rupees 50 to Rupees 100 from these outlets, as a result the end-users get a reduced amount of water. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation does not carry out inspections on the quality of the water it provides. In fact the Guwahati Municipal Corporation does not have a testing laboratory of its own.

Faced with growing problems over inadequate water, the Government of Assam had notified a scheme to bring the water supply in the entire city of Guwahati below a single board on the lines of Delhi’s ‘Jal Board’. Presently, the three agencies viz, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, the Assam Urban Water And Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) and Public Health Engineering Department are responsible
for supplying water in the city. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed in principle to make available a loan of Rupees 250 crores to implement the Greater Guwahati Water Supply Project, which envisages supplying 40 million litres of water per day (MLD). Another reason for creating a single water supply body is to streamline the distribution system.

(d) High-rise buildings and norms of construction:

Ever-increasing and unscheduled construction has been choking Guwahati for quite sometime now and an aerial survey of the city shows that unorganised chaotic and hard-nosed construction of multi-storied has almost misshapen the city into a ruthless situation of a concrete jungle with the verdant foliage being progressively condensed to meagre spaces in this once green conurbation.

Various organisations and members of the public have often raised the apprehension against this trend over the last few years. A committee (The Committee on Construction of Multi-storeyed Buildings in Guwahati) to look into the matter of construction of multi-storied buildings in Guwahati was constituted vide Government of Assam notification No GDD/65/2002/2 dated the 18th July 2002 with Dr. Nirmal Kumar Choudhury, Ex Vice Chancellor, Gauhati University as Chairperson and the following individuals as members:

1. Sri K.D. Lahkar, Ex-Commissioner, PWD, Assam.
2. Dr. Anil Kr.Goswami, Ex Principal, Cotton College.
3. Sri Vijayendra, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, GMDA.
4. Smt J.P Borah, Director, Geology and Mining, Govt of Assam.
5. Sri A.K. Majumdar, Director, Town and Country Planning, Govt of Assam.
The Committee had two basic broad parameters of reference:

1) To examine and identify the areas of the city in which multi-storied buildings are permissible.

2) To examine and suggest the limit for the number of floors for such buildings for which building permission can be granted.

The Committee was asked to report within 45 (forty five) days from the date of notification. But the 1st meeting could be held only on 1st August 2002, because of non-availability and prior engagements in other works of some members and as such the time of submission of the report was extended up to 30/09/02 vide Government notification No GDD65/2002/11 dated 11/09/02.

The Committee besides individual and group interaction with experts in related fields, obtained copies of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority Act, 1985, Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority & the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Building Bye-Laws and Building Bye Laws of 2001 of the Bhubaneswar Development Authority and some other similar Bye-Laws for ready references in structuring the recommendations. The Committee also deliberated the available data and maps prepared by a variety of organisations relating to land use and roads, slopes of hills and their stability factor, suitability of land, ward wise population density and availability of open space before the recommendations were given finishing shape. The recommendations of the
Committee on Construction are quite comprehensive and if followed stringently they would go a long way to relieve a lot of problems facing Guwahati and its population vis-à-vis the high-rises.

Guwahati is choking with a huge population figure. Increasing and unplanned construction is strangulating the city. Government of Assam has been exploring all possibilities together with the feasibility of the enactment of a legislation to prevent construction, mainly high rises, in the heart of the city in order to do away with indiscriminate growth. Besides Consulting Engineering Services (India) Pvt Ltd the Delhi based firm which is preparing the new Master Plan has been instructed to earmark places where construction activities must come to an end. Strategies are being developed to curb construction especially of multi-storeyed buildings in the prime areas of the city to contain congestion. Besides, the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation should also strictly scrutinise applications seeking permission for construction of high-rise buildings. In fact there is the absence of any mechanism to check the haphazard growth of the city, as the new master plan is yet to see the light of the day even four years after the expiry of the previous Plan in 2001.

e) Garbage Disposal System:

Since the bubonic pestilence epidemic in Surat in 1994, there has been improved spotlight on improving solid waste management services. The foremost initiative being the notification of the Municipal Solid Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules in 2000. These rules specify the course of action and the responsibility of the local self-governing
bodies as nodal bureaus in solid waste collection, haulage and dumping. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has set cut-off date for cities to set up appropriate processing, disposal and land filling facilities. The urban local governments across India are in the course of privatising different facets of solid wastes management to trim down the cost sustained in providing these services and to augment the level of efficiency on the whole. Wastes to Energy Projects have been positioned with diverse activities for scheduling and working these amenities connecting private sector and local bodies. Owing to the inadequate availability of funding and infrastructure none of the urban local governments seem to be in a position to meet up the deadlines for establishing waste processing and disposal facilities. Due to budgetary limitations, inadequate paraphernalia and inappropriate planning, house-to-house collection of wastes by local bodies is very atypical. In spite of rules and regulations and decentralised decision-making in urban services, the collection efficiencies still range on an average from 50 percent to 90 percent of the solid waste generated, leaving the balance unattended [As per Central Public Health Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) Manual 2000 on solid waste management prepared to provide guidance to local bodies].

The average expenditure on solid waste collection in most Class I cities is around 75 percent of the total expenditure on this service as per 1997-98 figures. This leaves little money for disposal activities making these services in efficient [National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA, 2000)]. This percentage rises to around 85 percent in Class II cities. The budget allocation for disposal of solid waste remains at 10 percent to 15 percent of the total expenditure on this service, insufficient to ensure proper disposal [National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA, 2000)].
Most local bodies find it difficult to incur heavy capital expenditure in improving solid waste collection, transportation and disposal arrangements. Given the resource constraints of the local bodies, the private sector should be encouraged as much as possible. Bearing in mind the high charge involved in waste management, the foremost concern of the local self-governing bodies, even in the case of privatisation have to be waste minimisation at the starting place. To make this possible, steps for the generation of awareness among the residents of the various localities should be undertaken to ensure the active participation of citizens.

In Assam, the effect of urban waste is made much more pig-headed and hazardous because of torrential rains and clamminess and awful drainage system. In the urban areas the municipalities and municipal corporations are in charge for management of various urban basic services, including providing basic facilities as per the provisions made in diverse legislations governing these organisations. In Assam there is a common arrangement of collection, transportation and disposal of city rubbish. The rubbish bins are not uniformly distributed throughout the Greater Guwahati Municipality areas. In Guwahati in most places there are hardly any garbage bins, only garbage collection points at which garbage are thrown at random, to be collected by garbage collection workforce. It is reported that some voluntary organisations are taking steps in Guwahati to provide arrangements for garbage collection bins e.g. the Barsapara Development Committee, in Ward No. 15.

Metropolitan refuse is discarded into pits without any isolation of wastes. It is the rag pickers who make the segregation and recover any biodegradable materials present in the litter, but while recovering such
stuff they often scatter the nearby places, making the collection dustbin still unapproachable.

There were two surveys undertaken to review the urban waste generated in Guwahati and the process for its disposal. The Assam Pollution Control Board in 1992 and another in 1994-95, sponsored by Assam Science, Technology and Environment Council, undertook the first of these studies. These reports catalogue the quantity of garbage created in Guwahati and also illustrate the methods of collection, transportation and disposal of the garbage. Some of the conclusions of these studies are:

- The citizens are not aware of the health hazards associated with improper solid waste disposal and are not much concerned about environment friendly disposal of garbage of their own household.

- Hardly 25 to 30 percent of the total solid wastes are regularly disposed off from the site of origin, while the rest goes into nearby drains, streams, and roadside and near the site of origin.

- The scavengers play a very important role in reducing the volume of waste generated and helping to recycle a part of it.

- There have been reports of voluntary organisations coming up and helping the municipal authorities to clean the city.

This is an indicator, may be, of things to come, in tackling the city garbage in a scientific approach, eradicating the grime and disgusting odour and generating power and compost out of the waste.
Of the alternatives available to the urban local governments for disposal of waste, the technique put into practice by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation is trenching or sanitary land filling method which is the commonest practice. But it has its allied problems of land and sub-soil water contamination besides ease of use of land is becoming scarcer with every passing year for stuffing of waste. Another principal annoyance for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has been the absence of a suitable garbage disposable site. The first trenching ground in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation area was near Maraxali where the Nehru Stadium stands presently; during the 1960s the ground was shifted to Barsapara. After filling up of the plot, it has now been made a proposed site for a cricket stadium. The next trenching ground for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was in Ambari-Fatasil near Radha Gobinda Barua College. That location has now been filled up and there now stands a park. Meanwhile the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has also selected two sites- one a swamp near the Balaji Temple and the other at Lokhra- for disposing the garbage of the city. The collection and dumping of garbage has now been contracted out. During the months of June 2004 and July 2004, collection and disposal of garbage had come to a grinding halt following the Guwahati Municipal Corporation’s failure to issue work orders to the contractors on time, even though its Standing Committee on Public Health etc. had given the green signal.

A source at the Guwahati Municipal Corporation says that the corporation does not have accurate data on the city’s municipal wastes as sampling and analysis of waste streams is not carried out at regular basis. According to a quick estimate, roughly the city produces about 300 metric
tonnes (MT) of garbage daily. Around 60 trucks are engaged by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation to clear the garbage, which makes three trips daily to different parts of the city. Despite this, a sizeable portion of the garbage still remains uncleared. The garbage disposal system has been a persistent problem with the Guwahati Municipal Corporation in the recent times. On the eve of the India-ASEAN Car Rally in November 2004, the Corporation had launched a door-to-door campaign seeking active co-operation and participation of the citizens in an ongoing cleanliness drive to maintain cleanliness in the city. But till date it is awful to see the garbage trucks ply throughout the day creating traffic snarls in many cases. Keeping with the timing of the first India–ASEAN Car Rally, a short term beautification and cleanliness drive was set rolling under the title “Guwahati Initiative”, and around 64 dustbins, quite irregular in shape to enhance their aesthetic appeal, coloured in the metallic hue were placed along the arterial roads of the city with messages to keep the city clean inscribed on them, mostly placed along the Guwahati-Shillong Road. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation had issued a notification asking the people to dump garbage inside the bins between seven pm to seven am with a word of warning that dumping garbage on the roads and pavements would invite punishments. A Vermi-composting or vermin-culture had been launched at the fag end of 2004 December by a non-governmental organisation, “Abhijatri”. In the process, earthworms are used for converting the wastes into compost (vermin-castings). This process has been successfully used in a limited scale in Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai etc., but there are no large-scale centralised plant experiences in India. Only small quantities of waste can be composted with this process. This process is recommended for smaller cities as one of the composting process to tackle the problem of waste disposal. The non-governmental organisation
“Abhijnatri” consists of senior citizens of Ward nos. 33 and 34. This community participation is a positive indication regarding the awareness of the citizens of Guwahati. As the Guwahati Municipal Corporation fails to clear garbage properly, the city remains littered and unhygienic. Organic manure will be produced in the process, which can be later utilised suitably. According to experts organic wastes be easily organic fertilisers with the use of advanced technology such as thermolysis. A site at Gorchuk has been earmarked for such a project. An Australian firm, Ecologic Pvt Limited has approached the Government of Assam with their Municipal Solid Waste Treatment System, the system is said to be environment friendly and that it actually converts waste into valuable resources. The technology treats wastes by two processes-i) that deals with the organic waste and ii) that concentrates on the various types of plastics. Thus the entire range of wastes, barring metals, could be easily disposed off, the process is already in use in Australia, Spain and Japan.

Table –4.4.1D
Citizen’s Response to the question “Have you ever taken any step to improve Garbage disposal system? If so How?” (In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Letters to editor</th>
<th>Discussed in the floor of GMC/Assembly</th>
<th>Submitted scheme</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>07%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex councillors</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>01%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork
The above facts make it amply clear that the issue of garbage in Guwahati or the garbage disposal system in the city has not attracted the attention of the senior and respectable citizens of the city remarkably. Except discussion, the respondents have done nothing concrete in this regard.

(f) Ecological balance in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Area:

The economic and demographic enlargement of urban areas is progressively placing harm on the urban environment. Sustainable environmental planning is at a premature stage and is not yet considered precedence. Consequently, increasing numbers of unauthorised private bore wells are dug at the cost of an ever flagging water table; rubbish and filth is thrown into open sewers, which subsequently become blocked because collection and disposal of refuse are shambolic and/ or under funded, and poor air quality causes an increasing number of respiratory health problems, prompted for example, by the uneconomical use of energy for cooking. It is the underprivileged that suffer the penalties of environmental degradation, resulting in ailments, disability and loss of incomes. Provisions for adequate and affordable civic amenities (e.g. water and sanitation, health care, education, financial credit, legal protection, etc) are thus an essential part of sustainable urban development and poverty reduction programmes. As urban realms grow, however, the stress on existing services and allied infrastructure multiply with a resultant enlargement in the number of people without access to these urban basic services. Inevitably, it is the poor and the most defenceless that are debarred and who finish up paying elevated charges for lower quality merchandise via the informal division. Ironically, it is the poor themselves
who provide many of the essential services, which keep the cities functioning. (Kundu, Dubey et al)

Municipal convenience arrangements are the indicator, which give evidence, as to what civic facilities the city inhabitants have the benefit of. But redundant community toilets, discarded latrines at public places, once again open the query if there is any municipal convenience system at all in the city of Guwahati.

Guwahati has no organised public toilets facility in its municipal area, excepting those in the Railway platforms Assam State Transport Corporation bus terminus, Deputy Commissioner’s Court, Bar Association Office, Post and Telegraph Office, Telephone Exchanges, and other few Government and semi-government establishments. In most of the cases, common people are not allowed to utilise these toilets. The urinals and latrines at Kachari bus stand, Fancy Bazar and Machkhowa, Garh-Pandu bus stands are in mess and add up to the monstrous picture of Guwahati. It is well known that preservation and setting up of public conveniences in the city is the responsibility of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

A budding metropolis like Guwahati with a vast swarm of populace needs large number of public conveniences like urinals and toilets. Non-existence of such conveniences compels the people to urinate here and there, which degrade the environment.
Table 4.4: Respondents' first Response in respect of factors that lead to environmental problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Lawyers</th>
<th>Journalists</th>
<th>Professors</th>
<th>Politicians</th>
<th>Ex councilors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No sufficient trees</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of open spaces</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Public conveniences</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclean city</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

Lack of proper management of the establishment concerned, dearth of finance and want of land in the crucial areas of Guwahati are the explanations for not undertaking any work to make better the conditions of the existing facilities and to append some new services. In the current setting the people without a roof over their head under forced conditions mainly use the existing public conveniences.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation’s official data reveals that sizeable amount of municipal land in the prime areas even municipality toilets were under encroachment. The role of private sector and non-governmental organisations in building and maintaining public conveniences on a pay-and-use basis was also being considered by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, a few years back (2002) which are yet to take off.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Official respondents revealed that as a matter of fact, proper building and maintenance of toilets and latrines at public places could save half of the money spent by the
authorities on cleanliness. Such steps would also earn revenue for the authorities and generate employment. Moreover it would go a long way in keeping the city free from many infectious diseases.

The main sources of sound pollution in the municipal areas are the ever-increasing number of vehicular traffic. The breakneck buses, heavy laded trucks, oil tankers, countless two and three wheelers, trekkers and commuter and personal car all amalgam to amplify the noise level. In busy streets guttural of horns by different means of transport almost at the same time make the commotion excruciating, particularly in horrible traffic jams. There are no direct laws against noise pollution. However, Air Pollution Act, 1981 (as amended up to 1986) and The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 recognised that noise pollution is an endemic of environmental pollution. Vehicular traffic, which is just about the exclusive cause of generate noise pollution in urban areas and in thoroughfares, is also principally responsible for air pollution. Atmosphere is said to be contaminated where all that it contains is misshapen by the presence of ‘foreign’ materials or when the magnitude of different apparatus of goods usually existing in the air is altered.

An awesome 90 percent of the means of transport plying on the arteries of Guwahati emit Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) far above the tolerable level. The astounding figure came to light during a survey in 2004 by Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA), a Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Undertaking. Even more dreadful is the discovery that the people those who possess vehicle and drive them as well are the most unconcerned to the emission levels and pollution control standards. Instead of getting their vehicles tested at emission centres (there
are around 20 such centres run by unemployed youth), they simply pay a fixed charge, get their vehicular pollution certificates and drive away. The number of vehicles on city roads includes those registered outside the city is over three lakhs, much more than the major thoroughfares and traffic lanes can put up with. In the year 2003-2004, 17,799 vehicles were registered; it was a jump of over 2000 from 2002-2003.

According to the National Ambient Air Quality Standard data released by the Eureka Forbes Institute of Environment on September 21, 2004 Guwahati is "unhealthy" as far as Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM), consisting of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen are concerned. It is evident therefore that the Guwahati Municipal Corporation is battling with a perennial problem of garbage and lack of funds and the city is becoming a veritable sink of pollution.

(h) Streetlights:

Except for the few main thoroughfares of Guwahati most of the streets of the city remains dark at night. Main roads and streets like the Guwahati Shillong Road, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road, and Gopinath Bordoloi Road have been lit up but a majority of the roads and avenues of the city plunge into pitch darkness once the shopkeepers down their shutters in the late evening. During the election campaign for the fourth general elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation in November 2003, various political parties in their manifesto promised the citizens of Guwahati that electronic traffic signal system at the key points and street lights in all lanes and by lanes would be installed. The present arrangement is that electronic traffic lights have been installed only at Chandmari crossing and Dispur last Gate junction. The Guwahati Municipal
Corporation Councillors were asked to submit estimates to install streetlights; however no progress has so far been made. "Own your own street light" scheme, launched by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority in 2003 was initially popular but fizzled out as it found few takers.

The Metropolitan Administration has already submitted the projects to the Government of Assam for setting up street lights from Jalukbari point to the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport construction of 10 bridges solely for pedestrians use, multi storied parking plazas and 20 public toilets.

G) Slums in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation area:

Slums are critical part of an urban neighbourhood significantly causative to the economy. The notion of "slum clearance" has transformed in the present day and in its place comes the perception of relocation, rehabilitation and poverty alleviation. It is to be noted that all the National States in the United Nations Organisation have agreed on reducing urban poverty and supported campaigns of cities without slums by 2020, each city must draw a city level plan to target this population living in slums or slum-like area. As a result metropolis without slums has materialised into a catchphrase, which needs to be accomplished through growth procedures to build township become more cost-effective, environmentally sustainable and collectively righteous and honourable. The weight should be on endorsing and implementing policies towards even-handed and sustainable development. Municipalities could engage in a very significant responsibility in teaming up with all other stakeholders of slums
improvement in enhancing the competence of the poor. Urban administration arrangements require getting better in three crucial areas:

1. Resource distribution,
2. Facility distribution and
3. Municipal governance.

Municipal governance should acknowledge that the underprivileged are an essential constituent of urban labour force that enhances substantially the production procedures. That is why; one requires the urban poverty-stricken groups to have access to the terrain at an affordable price tag. To adopt an attitude to deliver the urban basic services to the disadvantaged and more effective mobilization of public resources as per the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992, it is the eventual liability of the municipal administrative arrangements to deduce and put into practice the strategies to the best of their aptitude and to deliberate more on decentralised structures such as ward committees and community assemblages.

A large segment of population almost in each ward in Guwahatí live in slum like areas. Although the Guwahatí Municipal Corporation has not declared any area as slum, or there is no official notification, from the Government also, it cannot be denied that several pockets of the city have been developing almost slum like areas. The ORG Centre for Social Research a Kolkata based organisation while conducting a survey under the State Aids Control Society Assam found that there are at least 39 probable sites in Kamrup district where the High Risk population can be found. Out of these as many as 28 probable sites are within Guwahatí (Ref:
Table-M.IF). On a daily basis the basic infrastructures and facilities required by the communities surviving in such ghettos are water supply, community toilets, sewerage and health. Though the matters in the slums are “basic infrastructures”, many are quite intricate in the execution and necessitate more than an organisation for their appropriate implementation but there is colossal disorganisation and absolute be deficiency of synchronization among diverse other agencies concerned in the implementation of projects and the nodal agency i.e. the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

A casual analysis conducted by the Town and Country Planning Directorate, Government of Assam discloses that slums in Guwahati are up-and-coming at a speed as continual as the escalation of ostentatious constructions and upmarket areas. The number of slum pockets in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation area has gone up from 10 in 1991, 17 in 1997 to as many as 26 in 2003. A large segment of almost each wards population in Guwahati live in slums. If the slum population was 1,46,085 in 1997, it has increased to 1,60,371 in 2003. If the slum population was 1,46,085 in 1997, it has increased to 1,60,371 in 2003. In 1992, the population was 27,922 of which 16,955 were males and 10,967 females.

If the swelling figures are startling, then the vulnerability of the Urban Development Department in combating the crisis is also manifest. Given the fact that there is at least a four percent yearly escalation in the slum population of Guwahati. Going by the 2001 population norms, around 18 percent of the city’s population live in slums. The Urban Development Department’s labours have proved to be ineffectual because of inadequate finance, which it is expecting from the Government of India.
Official reports show (Letter No UD (P) A4/04/269 dated 8\textsuperscript{th} July 2005) that the Government of India has not released an earmarked central fund against certain schemes specifically meant for urban slums. Secondly, the situation marks a token allocation in the budget. The hold-up in submission of utilisation certificates to avail central funds in time by civic bodies has deteriorated the situation further. Being the sole metropolis of the Northeast India, Guwahati continues to grow at a high decadal growth rate of urban population of 38.20 percent in the category of Class I towns.

The rise in urban poverty is mounting the damage on the existing urban infrastructures in Guwahati. Under the National Slum Development Policy (NSDP) the Government of Assam received Rupees 2.19 crore for 2003-2004. On the contrary, the entire requirement to provide facilities like improved water supply, sanitation, roads and by lanes, drainage, community-halls, parks and playgrounds, health sub centres and street light work out to Rs 9 crore.

The Urban Development Department has taken steps to engage the receiver in preparing plans, choice of beneficiaries and union of all facilities by establishing neighbourhood assemblages.

Guwahati is coming up as a shantytown with slums mushrooming in various parts of the city. According to an estimate over 10,000 people reside illegally on railway properties in Greater Guwahati. It has been a enduring insist of several local organisations like senior citizens’ forums, students’ unions and the non-governmental organisations, and particularly Save Guwahati Build Guwahati to get the slum pockets isolated, as they reduce to rubble the loveliness of the city and pose a perpetual threat to the railway commuters and to the people dwelling in the neighbouring areas.
According to the official record of the Northeastern Frontier Railways, there are about 10,096 encroachments on its properties in Greater Guwahati. The highest number of encroachments in the city is at Maligaon and Pandu. Of the 10,096 encroachments in Greater Guwahati, 5,120 are in Maligaon and Pandu alone. There are 396 encroachments in proper Guwahati and 3,546 in the new part of the city where the Guwahati Refinery is located. There are 1034 encroachments in Amingaon on the outskirts as well.

On 14th December 2004, the Gauhati High Court through a judgement allowed the Railway authorities to evict encroachers from along the 16 kms of railway tracts at Narengi area of the city. The said High Court order had paved the way for construction of an underground tunnel worth crores of rupees by the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) in that area to flush out the city’s rainwater. Work on the tunnel was severely affected, as construction could not be carried out in Narengi because of the shanties, which are major security concerns. The National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) has been constructing the 100-meter long tunnel since 2004 to flush out the rainwater to the Brahmaputra through Soonsali Ghat at Noonmati. The main purpose of the tunnel would be to minimise oppress of the rainwater on the Bharalu rivulet. Large quantities of rainwater from the refinery, Noonmati and Radha Gobinda Barua Road will be flushed out through the tunnel. Once it is completed water logging in Radha Gobinda Barua Road, Nabin Nagar and Lachit Nagar is likely to be reduced to a great extent. But strangely enough the monsoons of 2005 the multi-crore tunnel did not serve its purpose and there was water logging as usual in various parts of Guwahati.
Table 4.4.1F

Some identified Slums of Guwahati:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Name of the slum</th>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Name of the slum</th>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Name of the slum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soonsali</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Athgaon,</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lakhtokia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fatasil</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Manipuribasti</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Shantipur (west),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harijan Colony</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bishnupur,</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Paltan Bazar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rajabari (Uzan bazaar)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Solapar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Harizan Basti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tokobari</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hedayetpur</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>GandhiBasti,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maraxali</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dhiren para</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Madhuban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bimala Nagar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Baranachal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Gauhati University Harijan Colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kumar para</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Birubari</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Moriya Patti (Uzanbazar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hatigaon-Sijubari</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sharabhati</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Krishnanagar (Japorigog)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Kachari basti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The ORG Centre for Social Research a Kolkata

The Urban Development Department has reconstituted the State Urban Development Agency, the nodal organisation and top establishment for regulation of the urban poverty alleviation programmes such as National Slum Development Programme (NSDP), low cost sanitation scheme, environmental improvement of urban slums and Valmiki Ambedkar Molin Basti Awas Yojana. The Urban Development Department has also stressed on developing towns in the vicinity like Palasbari, North Guwahati and Rangia to stop the inflow of slum dwellers to Guwahati.

A project involving crores of rupees to develop a slum pocket in the upwardly mobile Nehru Stadium area in the city had to be dumped as "decision in principle was taken for the closure of the project". The reason
riin.1 is the Guwahati Municipal Corporation's letdown to allot the required land to the construction agency. The State Government had appointed the Guwahati Municipal Corporation as the nodal agency for the project. The Government of India had sanctioned Rs 7.5 crore for the project intended at enhancing the splendour of the area along the Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road. The area is now flooded with huddle of hutments. The plot is located just opposite to the Nehru Stadium, which would have been an integral part of the National Games to be held in the State in 2005. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation even after a lapse of 19 months could not provide open land to construct only four blocks at Maraxali and six blocks at Solapar. As many as 21 blocks were foreseen to be constructed under the project. The Union Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation in 2002-2003 had assigned the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) to execute the housing complex scheme at Maraxali and Solapara.

(II) Open spaces, Parks and Children’s Parks:

Guwahati is known for its shortage of open spaces and the existing greenery and open spaces are fast being converted into other use. The narrow strip of open space along the south bank of Brahmaputra from Kharguli to Uzan Bazar popularly known as “Poki Ghat” too has come under threat of being transformed into concrete formations. Although the land records of the open spaces remain at the disposal of the Deputy Commissioner, the maintenance of the parks open spaces are still a duty entrusted to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The Corporation with meagre fund somehow just carrying on this responsibility.
There are a few noteworthy open spaces in the city and in this context mention may be made of the Latasil Ground, the Judges Field, the Sonaram High School Field, Khanapara Veterinary College Field, the Chandmari Engineering Institute Field, the open field belonging to the Assam State Textbook Production and Publisher’s Corporation Limited, adjacent to the Assam Engineering Institute in Panbazar etc. These grounds are frequently used for various fairs; exhibitions and sundry cricket matches all round the year. This leaves to us the few parks of the city. The Ambikagiri Raichoudhuri Park at Chandmari is exclusively for children. But the biggest park in the city is the Nehru Park adjacent to the Church field. Presently the Nehru Park has been given a massive face-lift by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority and the park is frequented by the Guwahatians at a fee. But the oldest park of Guwahati was the Jubilee Gardens where in the Panbazar Water Supply Project (Paani Tanky) was commissioned in 1960. The Jubilee Gardens has a chequered history; it has been the ground for legendary public meetings. Swami Vivekananda in 1901, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi held orations in 1946 and later on by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The original open space where the Deshabhakta Tarun Ram Phukan Park stands was sought to be taken over by the Public Works Department in 1957 for the purpose of converting it into a godown. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation resisted the move and later on the open space was converted into a park and named after this illustrious son of Assam.

The Sankaradeva Uddyan was built at Jalukbari when in 1958 a meeting of the National Congress was held. The Mahabir Park at Fancy Bazar along the Brahmaputra and the Ajan Pir Park were built by the
Guvahati Municipal Corporation under the sponsorship of private organisations asks for an entry fee from visitors. Another beautiful park, the Lachit Barphukan Park has come up as a very popular park with the children at the South End of the Saraighat Bridge. The Forest Department has also come up with the idea of an Eco-Park.

Provisions are there for open spaces at places like Dispur, Khanapara and Jawaharnagar. Some areas of the city in spite of being earmarked as “green belt” is under the threat of encroachment.

Another rare beauty spot of Guwahati is the Dighalipulkuri, which has frequently figured in the beautification process of the city since the establishment of the Gauhati Municipality in 1853. However, the first serious endeavour to uplift the beauty of this legendary ancient pond was made after Independence and after the constitution of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation when Radha Gobinda Barua became the first Mayor of Guwahati. The Fishery Department of the Government of Assam and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation shares the responsibility of maintaining the cleanliness in and around the pond.

In a rare attempt coordinated by the Kamrup (Metropolitan) District Administration and the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC), the Guwahati Municipal Corporation councillors are being stimulated with free offer to deliver the goods. They stand to win free trips to Bangkok, Singapore and Europe, if they can execute projects within target to make the Guwahati attractive and liveable. Under the schemes, the councillors were asked to spot open spaces in their respective wards for putting up parks, play grounds, parking lots and markets to steer clear of the process of decongesting the city. Foreign trip are to be treated as rewards or spur
for sincere and committed councillors; this would also go a long way to advance capability, competence and healthy rivalry among the councillors.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India in collaboration with UNDP has initiated the Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Project in 38 cities all over India having a population of more than five lakh each and Guwahati is the only city in the North Eastern region included in the project. It is a core survival worry for the people of this city that lack of open space may pose a menace to the city and the residents in case of a major catastrophe, particularly in view of the fact that Assam is marked in Zone V of the world seismic map. Several major shocks generally follow a major earthquake and because of lack of space in the city, it would be difficult for the Guwahatians to take shelter. There are lanes and bye lanes in the city where it is out of the question to move in fire tenders and this facet would critically affect rescue operation in case of a major natural adversity.

(1) Burial places and cremation grounds:

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation, over the years has developed a few burial places and cremation grounds in the city. The first burial ground exclusively for the Europeans used to exist in the ground where the Assam Engineering Institute in Panbazar stands now. The said burial ground was later shifted to the northern boundary of Directorate of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department at Chenikuthi Hillside but the burial ground is now redundant which is in fact a War Cemetery. Presently a burial ground for the Christians exists to the east of Navagraha Hindu Crematorium.
For the Hindus there are a few crematoriums in the city. The oldest is the Navagraha Smoixaan, which stands at around 200 meters to the north of Silpukhuri. Another crematorium for the Hindus is at Kalipur, which is known as the Kamakhya Smoixaan currently it has been renamed of Bhutnath Mukti Dham. Other two recognised crematoriums by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation are the Manik Nagar Smoixaan at Radha Gobinda Barua Road that is almost redundant and the other stands at Ulubari along the Banikanta Kakati Road.

For people belonging to the Muslim community there are two important burial grounds. Mention here can be made of the Athgaon Burial ground or Kabarsthan along the Sati Joymati Road in front of the Sri Gaushala, Guwahati. Another Kabarsthan is at Islampur just in the rear of Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road, near the Nehru Stadium. Earlier the Pub-Guwahati Idgah was also used as a Kabarsthan. There are Kabarsthans at Sijubari and Garigaon too.

Both the Nabgraha Smoixaan and the Bhutnath Mukti Dham is fairly well maintained crematoriums. The Bhutnath Mukti Dham complex has a medical unit inside and a cleaned up atmosphere with devotional renditions being played. The Lions Club of Guwahati has made certain infrastructural developments in the crematorium complex and the entire atmosphere is serene and very overwhelming as the Brahmaputra flows along quietly.

(J) Public health units:

The Public Health Department of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation earlier used to look after sanitation and there used to be a Sanitary Inspector who was the overall in-charge of looking after the
department. But gradually over the years within the Public Health Department of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation various sections were created and some health units were set up to look after functioning of the various branches of the Public Health Department.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation is also responsible for issuing birth and death registration certificates by a health officer. The Birth and Death Registration Office of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation stands at Ulubari, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road. Apart from this, an Officer is also posted for making regular checks in cases of food adulteration. Food Inspectors of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and the Health and Family Welfare Department have geared up for a special drive just before the Indo-ASEAN Car Rally November 2004 in the city. Checks were conducted to monitor the quality of food items served in posh hotels and restaurants. Surprise checks were also conducted at all major hotels, restaurants and eateries. Samples were collected to examine the quality of the foodstuff served.

The Public Health Department of the GMC also has a veterinary branch, which is responsible for taking into custody stray cattle and dogs within the city areas.

(K) Schools under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation:

The Guwahati Middle Elementary School at the opposite site of Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir, Uzan Bazar was the first school, which was set up and has been maintained by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The school was later renamed as Manik Chandra Middle Elementary School after the illustrious son of Assam the late Manik
Chandra Barua, who was also the first non-official Chairman of the Gauhati Municipal Board. The school over the years have been upgraded to a Higher Secondary School.

Besides this school there are four other lower primary schools under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. They are the following:

1. Gurunanak Lower Primary School near Nehru Stadium, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road.

2. Telegu Harizan Buniyadi Vidyalaya at the Harizan Colony near the Nehru Stadium, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road.

3. Mahatma Gandhi Harizan Buniyadi Vidyalaya at Fatasil Harizan Colony and


(L) Parking lots:

With the number of vehicular traffic in Guwahati is on the rise the problem of parking lot has become acute. Along all the busy and the arterial thoroughfares in Guwahati like the Guwahati Shillong Road, Motilal Nehru Road, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Gopinath Bordoloi Road, and in busy and congested areas like Paltan Bazar and Fancy Bazar, there are provisions of parking but such parking areas are often insufficient during the rush hours. To reduce the problem of parking lots there are plans and projects on the anvil.

The Government of Assam has already submitted a proposal to the North Eastern Council (NEC) to construct a multi-storeyed parking lot and a modern park on the present site of the jail after it would be shifted to Sarusajai area- further south of the city. The Kamrup (Metropolitan) District administration had cleared the 80-bigha plot of land in Sarusajai of
encroachments in September 2004. A substantial amount is envisaged to come to the State exchequer as revenue from the parking lot and the park. According to an earlier plan submitted to the North Eastern Council (NEC) either Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) or the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would have been entrusted with the task of constructing the parking lot and the park.

It can be mentioned here that New Delhi has already sanctioned Rs. 20 crore for the construction of the Guwahati jail with modern infrastructure at Sarusajai. Established in 1881, the jail at its present site in Fancy Bazar is overcrowded and also seems to be quite out of place in the middle of the city. Sources said that District Administration is eyeing this plot for an automated multi-level parking space. Certain parking lots have also come up under the newly constructed flyovers like the Bishnu Rava Flyover at Ulubari, the Bishnuram Medhi Flyover at Ganeshguri and the Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla Flyover at Athgaon.

The execution of three major projects, namely an automated multilevel parking, bus bays on Guwahati-Shillong Road and paid public conveniences in busy areas has been hanging on balance due to lack of adequate land within the city limits. According to the initial plans of the Metropolitan Administration, one of the bus bays will be constructed at Chandmari after closing down an abandoned park under the flyover. The other will be constructed at Chandmari Colony on the vacant land in front of the Khadi and Village Industries Board office and the Water Resource Department, while the third one has been planned at Silpukhuri. But since Central Department of the Development of the North-East Region Central Department of the Development of the North-East Region (DoNER) has
sanctioned Rupees three crores for the bus bay project, the Government of Assam suggested the bus bays on Guwahati- Shillong Road and Mahatma Gandhi Road, which is fast choking because of traffic congestion.

According to the District Administration there are plans for setting up parking lots near the Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital. The Central Department of the Development of the North-East Region (DoNER) had fixed September 2005 as the deadline for the execution of the project.

The current status of the project is as follows:

1) Central Department of the Development of the North-East Region (DoNER) sanctioned projects and informed Dispur in September 2004.

2) The Guwahati Development Department (GDD) and the Metropolitan District Administration have not yet been able to find suitable sites for construction of automated multi level parking bus bays and public conveniences.

3) National Building Construction Corporation Limited (NBCC) waits for no-objection certificates from the Government to execute the projects.

A parking lot in Chandmari was created on government land after the administration demolished an illegal vegetable and fruit market on June 9, 2004. It has leased out the land to a city based private firm. After signing an agreement with the District Administration the firm constructed the parking lot with its own funds. The District Administration in turn, authorised the firm to collect parking lot fees of Rupees five from light motor vehicles and Rupees three from two wheelers till it recovers its investment with interests within 15 years. Once the firm recovers its
money, the parking lot will be handed over to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

Lack of adequate parking space has compounded the problems for the traffic personnel and owners of two wheelers arguing with the police on busy roads have become a common sight at the backdrop of a spurt of bomb blasts, which have rocked the city in the month of December 2004. The traffic branch had created several no-parking zones in busy areas, especially on Guwahati-Shillong Road, Dispur, Panbazar, Fancy Bazar, and Chandmari during those days. The police have also begun spotting multi-storeyed residential and commercial buildings, which have been constructed in contravention of parking norms.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation had also decided to shift the fruit market, which blocks the underground parking lots inside the Fancy Bazar. Municipal Market Dealers Association has objected to this plan to set up provisional stalls inside the complex. The makeshift booths block the way to the underground car parking inside the Municipal Market Complex. At present the fruit market is situated in front of the Municipal Market Complex, which covers a long stretch of way. There is underground room for parking in the Municipal Market Complex, which remains unapproachable as the fruit hawker do not free the road. There is around 15 feet of open space around the campus of the Fancy Bazar Municipal Market Complex. The Fancy Bazar Municipal Market Dealers Association had also proposed to set up a water fountain at the entrance of the Fancy Bazar Municipal market complex with assistance from non-governmental organizations and private groups so that the environs of the market can be kept dirt-free.
(M) Markets:

The preservation of the city marketplace/bazaars is the responsibility of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. In the city the Guwahati Municipal Corporation owns nine markets but owing to the continuation of unsanctioned stalls along the city roads these markets have not been getting their ample share in the city trade. Such sights can be witnessed along the Guwahati-Shillong Road particularly at Paltan Bazaar, the Sir Sadullah Road conspicuously at Lakhtokia and at Fancy Bazaar and also along the Gopinath Bordoloi Road at Chandmari, Silpukhuri etc. Though the Guwahati Municipal Corporation is vested with enough powers to eject the encroachers, however the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has not been exercising its full power due to a variety of reasons.

Widespread encroachments could also be seen along the Tarun Ram Phukan Road at Machkhowa, Sir Sadullah Road at Fancy Bazar, the service road under the Ganeshguri Flyover, the Bani Kanta Kakati Road at Sharabhati, Tarun Ram Phukoon Road at Machkhowa, Xati Radhika Xaanti Road, i.e. the old Naujaan Road at Uzanbazar, the Guwahati Medical College Hospital Road at Bhangagarh, Assam Trunk Road at Paltan Bazaar and the Beltola Market Road.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation owns the markets located at various parts of the city. Some of them are the following:

1) The Old Sagoli Bazaar at Bhutnath.
2) The Machkhowa Bazaar.
3) The Fancy Bazaar Municipal Market.
4) The Kachari Ghat Bazaar.
5) The Uzanbazar Municipal Market.
6) The market under the Chandmari Flyover.
7) The Noonmati Bazaar.
8) The Dispur Municipal Market.
9) The Beltola Daily or Dainik Bazaar.
10) The Beltola Weekly or Saptahik Bazaar.
11) The Paltan Bazaar.
12) The Sarania Bazaar situated at Ulubari.

The Paltan Bazar Municipal Market, which is mainly a fish, meat and grocery market too is quite unhealthy. And it becomes all too very difficult for the buyers during rainy season. Mention can also be mentioned about the Kachari Basti Bazaar at the Dynamo Club Premises, which has encroached upon the footpath, and also the market at Colony Bazaar, at Kalapahar area in South Guwahati that is in shambles. However the situation of all these markets is round about pitiable, except the newly constructed Fancy Bazaar Municipal Market complex. The said market complex too has been embroiled in all sorts of unsavoury controversies. The Fancy Bazaar Municipal Market has been constructed to rehabilitate the fire victims of 1989, but there have been numerous accusations and charges in the allocation of rooms and stalls in the market complex. There has been tremendous amount of encroachment in and around this market complex, as even the pedestrians cannot walk on the pavements.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation has approved such unauthorised vendors legality by collecting taxes from them. It has even appointed lessees to collect Rupees 10/- from each such vendor as rent and Rupees two as scavenger tax everyday. Such unauthorised vendors are even given receipts, which only makes it more difficult to remove them.
The number of such illegal market is escalating day by day and for the past several years flouting all rules and regulations.

(N) Budget System

National and State Finance Commissions:

In concordance with its activities, urban local governments apply their resources in various possible ways for which it needs to mobilise funds from various sources. The procedures of such planning or forecasting revenues and its appliance or expenditure are called budgeting and the document that provides information on the planned sources and applications of funds is called the budget. "...It is also an authorisation of an order by competent authorities to make the expenditures and collect the revenues". It is the fundamental economic policy document of any national, regional or local self-government. The budget therefore is a yearly record that is prepared at the end of a fiscal year for the following year.

The basic sources of revenues of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation are the various Municipal rates and taxes, which also includes taxes on urban immovable properties - private, Government and semi-Government - other assigned taxes like share of land revenue, and local rates, entertainment taxes and Taxes on vehicles under Motor Vehicles Act etc. Another major source of revenue is the grants and contributions from Government and other sources. The receipt of the Corporation although shows a growing trend but not at the rate it is required. The following table shows the details of receipts of the Corporation with reference to certain years.
Table-4.4.1G
Receipt Budget of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Actual Receipt (In Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>02949080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>05431571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>04557388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>08842726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>25414863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>24236653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>26748052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>29299842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>31802736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>44631844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>3067.96 Lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>4694.25 Lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>12475.30 Lakhs (BE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from Poura Bichitra, 1978, 1984 and official sources.

It may be observed from the table that the rate of collection has been gradually increasing at a steady rate from Rs 0.29 crore in 1972-73 to Rs 124.75 crore in 2005-2006 as per budget estimates. But this rising trend in receipt when compared with the expenditure presents a bleak picture. In 2003-2004 as against the collection of Rs 30.68 crore expenditure was to the tune of Rs 34.46 crore. It was marked a surplus budget only due to the existing opening balance. Similarly, in the year 2004-2005 as against the collection of Rs 46.94 crore, expenditure was Rs 56.36 crore. Despite the existence of an opening positive balance, the Corporation in that year had a deficit budget.