CHAPTE R - VII

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATION & TRADE

Gauhati is called the gateway of Assam because one can go to any place of Assam from outside Assam through Gauhati. It is linked with whole of Assam and rest of India with Railway, Water way, Road way and Air Transport. These four basic means of transport in Gauhati viz. (1) Railways (2) Roads (3) Water way and (4) Airways are at present more or less inter-linked.

(1) Railways:— In ancient time, the Brahmaputra served as the main artery in the communication system of Assam. In latter times the development of railways, waterways and roadways have made the transport system of Assam more broad-based. The railway communication commenced in the State of Assam in 1880's. In 1897 Gauhati was connected with Jamunamukh of Nowganj district by a railway line and this was extended upto Lumding after three years. The whole railway line upto Tinsukia was completed in 1903. While performed the opening ceremony, Lord Curzon described the line as "one of the most costliest and most difficult railway enterprises that have ever been undertaken in India." Several people had to lay down their lives during the construction of the railway line in thick forest areas.

Before partition Assam was connected with the rest of India by the Bengal Assam Railway. After independence due to creation of Pakistan the major portion of the Bengal Assam Railway went over to Pakistan. Owing to this, there ceased to be any direct rail-link between Assam and the rest of India. As Assam is a
frontier state and one of the richest natural regions of India, so commercial, strategic and political considerations rendered the establishment of rail-link between Assam and the rest of India. So a direct link of Assam with the rest of India has been constructed through the 12-mile gap between Nepal and East Pakistan. This line of 142.5 miles metregauze was begun in January, 1948 and opened several months ahead of schedule in January, 1950.

After creation of railway zone, the Assam part of former North-eastern Railway falls in to the zone of North-East-Frontier Railway. This zone came into existence on 15th January, 1958 by spreading a portion of North-Eastern Railway. This line begins from Assam and serves northern part of West Bengal and North Bihar. This zone also includes the Darjeeling-Himalayan line. The whole zone has a route mileage of 1738 miles and its headquarter is at Pandu.

This North-Eastern-Frontier route is the route by which our exports reach Calcutta, the nearest port from Assam. But this route at present has only a very limited capacity. The route is also circuitous and consequently, the cost of transport of goods by this route is very high. As this is the only route connecting this state with India, the rush of passengers and movement of goods are very high and so the trains plying on these lines always remain overloaded. The river Brahmaputra and Ganges intervene in the rail route from Gauhati to Calcutta. It also passes through difficult terrain subject to heavy torrential rains.

The railway tract is criss-crossed through a number of nalas, rapid streams and big rivers which get flooded during the rainy
season and the route is subjected to danger of destruction. Inundation of the tracts, damage of some parts by floods or washing away some of the bridges and culverts are the common features now-a-days during the rainy season.

All these narrated difficulties make the journey unduly lengthy and extremely inconvenient. The remedy for this transport bottleneck perhaps lies in the construction of bridges over the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. Thanks to our National Govt. for understanding the transport problem of this frontier state, a Road-Cum-Railway Bridge is being built over the Brahmaputra river, the foundation stone of which has recently been laid by the Prime Minister Shri Nehru. It is hoped that the construction of the bridge will be completed in the next year and the bridge will remove to some extent the transport bottle neck of Assam.

Another objective - the Capacity of the Assam link can be fulfilled by making the route a broadgauge line or a double metregauge line.

(2) Roads and Streets: - The road system is one of the best mechanisms for movement on land people and commodities from one place to another. It is also the best means of communication for the inter relationship of the various functional zones of a city.

The principal functions of this system of communications are:

1) to give access to the adjoining areas;
2) to collect and distribute traffic within an area;
3) to load and unload from one area of the town to another;
4) to provide light and air to the abutting buildings; and
5) to provide for sanitation, electric and telephone lines etc.

Gauhati possessed a good number of roadways. Due to the growth of population of Gauhati, the number of vehicles of different types
A view of the Uzanbazar Steamer Ghat

Heaps of C.I. Sheets unloaded from the steamers at the Fancy Bazar Ferry Ghat

A scene of Pandu River Port

Shillong-Gauhati Motor Stand

Taxi Stand of Fancy Bazar
are increasing day by day. According to the Municipal Report, in September, 1957 there was one vehicle for every 34 persons. The ratio of vehicles per person will further increase with the development of outlying areas. Though Gauhati is well-served by a good number of roadways compared to the other towns of Assam yet its road system is far from satisfactory. The present road system though not entirely haphazard yet in most cases they are too narrow for two cars to move from opposite directions. Even the state Highway (the A.T. Road) which runs almost through the heart of the city has become more of a town street rather than a through traffic road where the traffic has to move at a comparatively higher speed and with minimum obstruction. The road system of Fancybazar area is too narrow to permit the easy movement for two cars from opposite directions. The roads which are constructed recently in the newly developed areas are also not adequate to serve the purpose. These roads also have not sufficient width to function as the hauls of the city's activity. As a matter of fact the existing road system is not adequate to meet the needs of the increased traffic. So it is very necessary to improve the existing road system of Gauhati and to construct more roads for the outlying areas by following a good plan. In this respect the Master Plan will be good for their plan and the plan will provide a complete and well integrated functional road system as well as some alterations and improvements in the present road system.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ROAD SYSTEM:

Among the existing roads the following are the major roads in Gauhati:
(1) The Assam Trunk Road: — Coming from west i.e. from Goalpara, the Assam Trunk Road passes through the heart of the city and runs to the east towards upper Assam. It passes through one of the most busiest areas of the city and at present all the thorough traffics between upper and lower Assam have to go through this road. The present Assam Trunk Road is proposed to be converted into the National Highway. This proposed National Highway will run from Kamakhya Railway Station along the foot of Kalapahar and Narakesur hills to their north side and will meet the junction of the Basistha road and G.S. Road.

(2) The City Bus Route: — Part of the Noonmati Road, Manik Chandra Barua Road, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Road, Tyagabir Hemchandra Barua Road and Machkhowa Road forms the city bus route, the main thoroughfare of the city.

(3) Strand Road: — This road is divided into two parts—Lower Strand Road and Upper Strand Road. Both of them run parallel to the river Brahmaputra.

(4) The Lokapriya Bordoloi Road and Noonmati Roads run more or less parallel to the railway line.

Besides these there are major and minor roads which form a network of the city and they are—T.R. Phookan Road, Shillong Road, Lakhinath Bezbarua Road, Kanak Lal Barua Road, Murulidhar Road, Athgaon Road, R.K. Chowdhury Road, Banikanta Kakati Road and Lokhra Road etc.

COMMUNICATION OF GAUHATI WITH OTHER TOWNS OF ASSAM BY ROADS

Gauhati lies on the important Assam Trunk Road. The road passes through the town itself by running from Goalpara to Dibrugarh connecting Gauhati with other important towns of southern Assam. Gauhati is
also located at the terminus of the strategically Gauhati-Shillong Road. This road connects the economic capital of the state with its political capital. Gauhati is also connected with very important towns of Assam—Barpeta, Nalbari, Rangia, Mangaldai, and Tezpur by North Trunk Road.

The following table shows the important routes of Assam that connects Gauhati with other towns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Roads</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Metalled or unmetalled</th>
<th>VIA important places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Assam Trunk Road (Gauhati to Goalpara).</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Pitched</td>
<td>Palasbari, Dhupdhar, Boko, Chai-gaon, &amp; Batarhat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Assam Trunk Rd. (Gauhati to Dibrugarh).</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>Pitched</td>
<td>Nowgong, Jorhat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Gauhati-Shillong</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Pitched</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Gauhati-Tezpur</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Macadamised &amp; a portion pitched.</td>
<td>Mangaldai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) North Gauhati-Barpeta-Buruam-Barpeta.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>Rangia, Nalbari.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) N. Gauhati-Sarthabari-Barpeta.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>Rangia, Nalbari.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) N. Gauhati-Goreswar</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>Chariali, Karara, Suklaghat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) N. Gauhati-Hajo-Barpeta.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Macadamised</td>
<td>Daulasal, Chenga, Tarabari, Amingaon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Pitched and Macadamised ... 779 Mls.

(3) WATER WAYS:— In the past the Brahmaputra served as the main artery in the communication system of Assam. In 1848, the Govt. steamers were deputed to ply between Calcutta and Gauhati. In 1860,
the Indian General Steam Navigation Company entered into a contract to run a pair of vessels every six weeks, provided that the Government boats were taken from the line. Since that date the steam navigation of the Assam Valley has been in the hands of this company and the River Steam Navigation Company with whom they are associated.

Gauhati receives directly all the merchandise from outside Assam. The raw materials flowing from all parts of Assam find a direct route through Gauhati to other important industrial places of India. For this the Brahmaputra serves as the main thoroughfare, furnishing cheapest transportation. Jute, Grains, Mustard Oil, Tea etc. and Coal from Cherrapunji are at first carried by trucks or by goods train and then these are sent to Calcutta by steamers while other consumer's goods and heavy commodities are carried from Calcutta to this town by the same. Of course, after partition this waterway has lost its importance because the downstream part of the Brahmaputra have been included in Pakistan.

The riverine transport centres are located at Uzanbazar, Sukreswar and Fancy Bazar with well developed jetties in Gauhati. But the main water transport centre of Gauhati is located at Pandu. It appears that Gauhati always depend much on Pandu for its commercial activities. An inland river port is also proposed to be located at Pandu and for this a project is now under operation at Pandu.

(4) AIR WAYS :- Air transport is also beginning to play an important role in the transport system of the state. The history of air ways is very short. It is only after the World War II Air Transport is started. It has set up a firm footing after nationalization of the air ways.
After partition and consequent creation of East Pakistan, the land routes and water ways to Assam were virtually sealed up till the construction of Assam link along the foot of the Himalaya. This new route is unduly lengthy and extremely inconvenient and subject to damage. Moreover, particularly in the rainy season this railway route is subjected to damage from floods. So during this season Airway becomes the only route between Assam and the rest of the India. Due to this anomaly of the surface transport and water communication, air services have been quickly developed.

Now at Barjhar- 12 miles south-wést of Gauhati, a second class aerodrome is located. This aerodrome is well equipped with a meteorological observatory with instruments, long and spacious runway and well equipped rest house.

Gauhati is now linked with important places of Assam-Tezpur, Jorhat, Dibrugarh etc. and also directly connected with Calcutta by airways.

It is the quickest means of transport. For example letter, daily news papers etc which would otherwise have taken 3 days to reach from Calcutta to Gauhati, now reach within 3 hours. The air transport will go a longway in establishing effective link between Assam and rest of India. It will also take time for men to get air-minded. A time may come in near future that the airways will be the vital transport agency in Assam so far as maintaining connections with the outside world is concerned.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

The means of transport as described above serve the area. Here trains plays and important role in the haulage of the commodities and carrying passengers from one place to another. Adequate
number of coaches are necessary for the haulage of consumer's goods for the town in general and the state in particular. But trains which ply over this route have no adequate number of coaches that cater the full demand of the goods to be moved. Besides there are no sufficient number of branch lines to meet the regional demand.

Automobiles also play an important part in the haulage of commodities and passengers throughout the state. There is extensive daily bus service from Gauhati to important places of Assam and the major parts of the Kamrup District. Over and above this there are some special buses meant to cater the demand of the market places and are called "Bazarbuses". Three efficient city bus-services - one from Bamunimaidan to Pandu, Bamunimaidan to Jhalukbari and the other one from Khanapara to Jhalukbari work since 6 A.M. to about 9 P.M. daily. These city-bus-services ply along the main thoroughfares of the town.

The Railway Station which was located once on the southern most part of the town, has now become in the heart of the town due to the southward extension of the town. It is one of the biggest Railway Stations of the N.F.Railways and also the transport focus of the town. Attached to its front is the Gauhati-Shillong Motor Stand which is probably the busiest motor-stand of all Assam. State Transport vehicles run from this motor-stand to Shillong thrice daily by scheduled timings and the journey is made in three hours with a brief halt at Nongpoh, a midway station allowing up and down vehicles to cross over along the one-way road. In each time not less than 21 vehicles including First Class/Second Class/Buses, Lorries leave this stand and the corresponding
three convoys each consisting the same number of vehicles arrive here. Similarly buses run to and from this stand to Nowgong and Dibrugarh daily by scheduled timings keeping the motor-stand busy all day long.

Another State Transport Motor Stand is at Machkhowa. From here buses are plying along the A.T. Road to Jhalukbari, Palasbari, Dhupdhara, Boko, Chaigaon, Rampur, Batarhat and Goalpara by scheduled timings daily and arrive at the stand accordingly. University buses (state transport) are plying through this line between Dighali tank to Jhalukbari daily at regular hours. Fancy bazar is the another traffic centre for the town and its suburban areas like Pandu, Kamakhya and Jhalukbari.

Gauhati is connected by ferry with North-Gauhati located on the northern bank of the river. There are two motor stands at North-Gauhati - one is State Transport Bus stand another one is the Private Syndicate Motor stand and the latter is maintained by different bus-associations. So while Gauhati is the gateway of Assam, North-Gauhati is the gateway of Gauhati having the transport focii for North Assam. From the State Transport Bus Stand buses are plying to Tezpur and Mangaldai and arrive here accordingly at proper time daily. Similarly buses are running from the other motor stand daily by regular timings to Rangia, Nalbari, Barpeta, Goreswar, Hajo, Soalkuchi and come from these places to here accordingly.

As stated about it is better to give a list of traffic data for Gauhati town with its accessibility in relation to time with other towns in Assam
### TRAFFIC DATA FOR GAUHATI TOWN

#### TABLE NO. XIV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>To and From</th>
<th>No. of buses &amp; luggage vans plying daily</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Time reqd. in Hrs.</th>
<th>VIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Assam State Transport</td>
<td>Gauhati to Nowgong</td>
<td>... 4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jagiroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Dibrugarh</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jorhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Shillong</td>
<td>... 63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Goalpara</td>
<td>... 3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Palasbari</td>
<td>... 8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45(Minutes)</td>
<td>Jalukbari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Dhubighora</td>
<td>... 6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2hrs.15mins.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Boko</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1hr.45 mins.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Chaigaon</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1hr.10mins.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Rampur</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauhati to Batarhat</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Mangaldai</td>
<td>... 2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Tezpur</td>
<td>... 1</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Private Syndicate</td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Nalbari</td>
<td>... 8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kamalpur, Rangia,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Puthimari, Barpeta</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Rangia,Nalbari, Barama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Damodardham</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Puthimari, Rangia,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MOVEMENT OF COMMODITIES

*(Trade and Commerce)*

Assam is mostly an agricultural state and it is the main productive industry for the people of Assam. It employs 73.4% of the total population of the state and the state 'enmasse' is a food surplus area. Assam produces a large variety of food and cash crops. Of the different districts in Assam, Kamrup leads in production as regards food crops. The food crops include paddy, various pulses, sugar cane, maize and potatoes and vegetables. Among the fruits orange, pine-apple, plum, pear, peaches, jack fruit are important. Jute, Tea, Tobacco are the important cash crops.

While agriculturally Assam is a food surplus area, industrially it is the poorest state of India. Nearly all the industrial products has got to be imported from the out side. All the districts of Assam are not self-sufficient as regards food products. So a considerable amount of food products such as rice, pulses etc. and other products such as oil seeds, tea, cotton, fruit, timber, Endi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>To and From</th>
<th>No. of buses &amp; luggage that plying dly.</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Time reqd. in hrs.</th>
<th>VIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Bus Syndicate</td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Sarthebari, Barpeta.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rangia, Nalbari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Goreswar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chariali, Karara, Muktapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>N.Gauhati to Hajo</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1½</td>
<td>Amingaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>N.Gauhati - Hajo-Barpeta.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Daulasal, Chenga, Chechamukh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and muga, silk clothes, poultry etc. are move within and outside the state of Assam while important imports include piece goods, cotton yarn, pulses, kerosene, salt sugar, hardwares, metal utensils and corrugated iron sheets.

The wealthiest and most important traders in Gauhati are Marwari merchants, locally known as Kaiyas. They deal in various business viz. food grain, potatoes, general merchandise, stationeries, provision goods, hardware, tobacco, flour mills, bank, rice and ata and oil mills etc. At present 148 men deal in whole-sale trade. Besides them there are large number of retail sale traders also.

The bulk of trade is generally carried on with Calcutta. The traders generally purchase all the commodities coming from the neighbouring villages of the district and then sent to abroad. Retail traders of the local people purchase cloth, stationeries, kerosene, industrial oil and other consumer’s goods from the whole-salers for their neighbouring local market.

Gauhati receives raw food materials for local consumption mainly from neighbouring villages. Potatoes and other vegetables come mainly from Dolibari-Pocheria area, a prominent market gardening zone, of the Hajo Circle situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Some amount of vegetables, fruits mainly pine-apple, orange, plum and pears come from Shillong by truck. Fishes are imported to Gauhati from the several parts of Kamrup district, parts of Nowgong district and from Dhupdhara area of Goalpara district. A certain class of local people living in the town proper also catch fishes in the Brahmaputra river and they sell their caught fishes directly among the other town people. Eggs, Goats, Poultry etc. also come from neighbouring areas to the town, a part of which goes to Shillong as well.