The study reveals that the area under investigation is a highly hazard-prone tract of the Brahmaputra floodplain. Flood and erosion has, for long, been a chronic problem in this area. Marked changes are observed in every aspect of human activity as well as in the morphology of the physical landscape. The southward shifting of the Brahmaputra bankline creates a grim situation specially in the north eastern part of the area. As many as one hundred and one villages had been eroded away from the study area so far. At least fourteen villages are either partially being eroded or are under threat of severe erosion at present. It is estimated that during the period 1911 to 1995 more than 30 per cent of the area had been eroded away rendering thousands of people homeless. It is not possible to determine the exact number of people who were dislodged from the area due to lack of recorded data. However, it may be roughly estimated to be more than 40,000 and the fresh waves of uprooted people are still continuing. It is found that immediately after the great earthquake of 1897, large
scale movements of people have occurred from the northwestern part. It is also observed that though erosion was a regular phenomenon in this part prior to 1950 earthquake, after this great cataclysm the intensity of erosion has been accelerated to a great extent. It is estimated that in the severely erosion affected part, the southward shifting of Brahmaputra bankline was of the order of 2 to 6.5 kilometres on an average. The old town area of the present Palasbari town was totally eroded away during the period 1950 to 1960.

The study area covers an area of 69,290.57 hectares with a population of 2,85,722 excluding Palasbari town according to the 1991 census. The Palasbari town at present covers an area of 267 hectares and has a population of 4,684 according to 1991 census. There is a great pressure of population in the area not only due to natural growth, but also due to migration of people that are rendered homeless by erosion. The erosion and flood affected people are resettled in the neighbouring villages lying to the south. As a consequence, large-scale encroachment of forest land, swampy areas and even the agricultural lands where grass reclamation is possible has taken place for settlement purpose. In turn, it causes an increase in the flood hazard intensity. Again, for this encroachment the flora and fauna of the area are greatly disturbed.
of species of flora and fauna have disappeared from the area. Due to erosion of grazing fields and settlement of people on reserve lands which were allotted to the erosion-affected people for rehabilitation, the cattle population has greatly suffered. During the time of flood when almost all the areas are under water, the dearth of fodder poses a serious problem and it become difficult to keep them in safety. The erosion of the Brahmaputra creates such a situation in the area that rehabilitation of the erosion-affected people poses a serious problem for the State. As the erosion is still going on unabated, fresh groups of people are always being added to the rehabilitation seeking people. A good number of people are still waiting for years to be rehabilitated. They were temporarily staying on the retired embankments or in the area immediately to the south of the embankment. It is observed that almost all the people of this category belong to economically poor class. So, it may be concluded that the poor people are becoming poorer due to these natural hazards in comparison to economically well-off families who are able to manage a plot of land by themselves without waiting for the government help. The condition of the scheduled caste people who depend on fishing for their livelihood has greatly deteriorated due to the hazard. It is because of the fact that due to the
erosion as well as sedimentation of beels, swampy areas and encroachment of these areas due to flood and erosion hazard, the fish population is fast decreasing which greatly affects the fishing profession. A sample survey was carried out in some areas where erosion-affected people were rehabilitated and resettled on their own initiative. It is observed that the condition of newly rehabilitated people is awfully precarious. Most of them were marginal peasants and workers who were given only half bigha (0.13 ha) of land for settlement in the interior areas. Almost all of these people have joined the marginal worker group in the State. In contrast, the people rehabilitated 60 years ago are already well established in the new locations. The people rehabilitated during early 50's and before 80's have already adjusted to the new locations. Of course, it may be noted that most of them are deprived of agricultural activities which was their primary occupation before erosion. People rehabilitated before 50's and 70's were allotted a sizable amount of agricultural land i.e. 10 to 20 bighas. As for example, the people rehabilitated in villages like Maloibari, Bahduar, and Makeli got this opportunity. But it is already mentioned that people rehabilitated after 1980 got a plot of land for settlement only. It is reported by the people of the resettled locations that a great difficulty has been faced by them in adjusting to these
new locations. Adjustment to the new physical as well as cultural environment poses a problem for them. The people originating from riverine locations initially had difficulty in adjusting to the upland environments. A number of economic, social and cultural problems have been faced by them. Besides, there is always a conflict between the old settlers and the new settlers. Even among the people coming from different areas that settle in the new locations, there is always social disharmony and conflict. The scheduled caste people appear to suffer more if their number is less and if they are settled in areas dominated by higher castes. They suffer from caste discrimination and social injustice in the new locations. Problem of identity is found to exist among almost all the resettled people. It is also observed that the resettled people come to the new locations as a group from the village or 'paras' and try to give their original village name to the new location. Even the name of the school and place of worship are maintained as it was in their original locations. The study reveals that there is a deep attachment of people to their original places, so, it is found that many villages within the area although retains the original names, but in reality these villages have already shifted from the area due to erosion. It is interesting to note that the indigenous people had shifted to the south in accordance with the shifting of the Brahmaputra bankline but the chars created
by the migrating river in the locations where eroded villages existed are occupied by immigrant people from across the border from Bangladesh. These chars are used for settlement as well as agricultural activities.

Due to flood and erosion hazard, the agricultural landuse of the area has also greatly suffered. In the erosion affected parts, due to dearth of agricultural land, raising of some varieties of crops are already discontinued. Sugarcane, jute, oilseeds, pulses were abundantly grown in the alluvial tract of this region. But, these types of crops are now grown only in the northwestern part of the area. The staple crop of the area i.e., rice is also ravaged regularly by the annual floods. In the western part of the area where flood and flash floods are predominant, there is uncertainty of kharif crop. So the cultivator are reluctant to do this type of cultivation, rather they prefer to seek other means of occupation than agriculture. From the data collected regarding occupational pattern, it is observed that a less number of people are engaged in cultivation, not because they are getting alternative occupation but are forced to do so due to the fierce flood and erosion hazard. Another interesting factor observed in the areas of severe flood and erosion is that the people are not willing to construct permanent houses. Although some of them
have capacity to do that. Of course, it may be mentioned that as a whole the economy of the area is very poor and marginal in nature. It is needless to mention that during and after the floods, there invariably arises the problem of sanitation and diseases. The meagre surface communication facilities are also disrupted which hampers the normal activities of people living in the interior places. They are unable to come to the central places for buying provisions and to commute to their working places.

Data on flood damage collected from the Revenue Department of the State Government covering a period of eight years reveals an alarming picture in respect of crop damage, house damage, damage of public utilities, etc. It is estimated that during this eight year period, 1983 to 1995, loss of agricultural crop in terms of rupees amounted to Rs. 8,90,29,492. Loss due to damage of houses is valued at Rs. 3,31,29,124. Loss of cattle population during this period is 2,219 in number and the value in terms of rupees is estimated at Rs. 21,67,330. The loss in case of public utilities which include damage to roads, school buildings, places of worship, market places etc. is estimated at Rs. 2,33,92,225. Due to erosion a total of 41.1 ha of land were lost within this period affecting 38 villages and 601 families. The value of this loss including the loss of land amounted to Rs. 4,75,42,525. There is even loss of seven invaluable human life due to flood during the study.
period. Besides, untold human sufferings were caused to the people living in the area.

To check the area from flood and erosion, protection measures, mainly construction of embankments, were started in the year 1954. But this measure proved unfruitful as uptil now there have been breaches of embankment for at least six times. In accordance with the southward shifting of the bankline, the embankment has also been shifted to the south. The construction of these embankments affects the agricultural landuse and settlement pattern of the area due to obstruction of natural drainage and destruction of the original pattern of settlement and landuse. People of the area are disappointed with the performance of the embankments due to the popular perception that these structures are responsible for the increased flood intensity. The people living to the south of the embankment complained about waterlogging and defertilisation of their agricultural land.

Dredging of the river in the north eastern part of the river was also attempted but this was also eventually found unsuitable. Seven land spurs have been constructed under the Palasbari-Gumi project in selected vulnerable portions of the area. Though it is at present showing a positive result, yet in between spur numbers 1 and 2 and 6 and 7 heavy erosion is continuing. So it is feared that this measure will also be unable to save the area. Again, the areas upstream an
downstream of the land spurs are under severe erosion which threatens the existence of the whole region.

From the above discussion, it is found that the entire study area is severely affected by flood and erosion hazard which merits massive efforts in terms of technological input, administrative planning and social awareness. The structural measures adopted for protection of the area is proved to be quite insufficient in this respect. The use of more appropriate protection measures and their management based on proper hydrological and geomorphological assessment of the problem should be adopted to protect the area. The relief and rehabilitation of the erosion-affected people requires immediate interference of the government. In addition to long term measures like construction of dams, spurs, channelisation etc., the short term measures like construction of raised platforms to save human life as well as livestock during the time of flood, crop insurance to relieve the peasants, loans etc. may be suggested. It may also be suggested that an awareness programme from the concerned authority as well as the non-government organisations is needed to motivate the peasant to change their cropping and pattern and crop calendar to save the damage due to natural hazards. More emphasis is be given on raising rabi crops so as to avoid the fury of floods during the kharif season. Of course, it will need irrigation facilities which
could be provided easily by the authorities as there is ample ground as well as surface water resources in the area. Economic activities like fisheries, dairy farming, afforestation etc. in scientifically planned manner should be implemented in the area to develop the economy as well as to minimise the ravaging hazard of flood and erosion.