Development of Silchar as an Urban Centre and Growth of its Society and Economy
Process of urbanisation and de-urbanisation refers to the stages of growth and decline of the demographic and economic aspects of the cities. Urbanisation starts with early industrialisation when people migrate from rural areas to urban areas. It proceeds with industrial expansion and the proportion of urban population increases. A stage of relative centralisation occurs when cities stretch over their boundaries and begin to develop suburbs. Urbanisation in India is not co-terminus with Western station. Urbanisation is not a new concept in India. India had the experience of urbanisation throughout the ancient, medieval and of course, the modern ages looked from the historical point of view. The Indus Valley civilisation was essentially urban in nature, and the Buddhist period had also witnessed urbanisation throughout the northern, middle and southern part of Indian sub-continent. But urbanisation lacked continuity and as such many cities of great importance decayed and literally reduced to ashes or dusts. But the situation in the immediate pre-colonial days is different. Urbanisation in the town or cities during the colonial or post-colonial days is different. Urbanism during the period has acquired a consistency and has been consolidated with time and it is from this point of view urbanisation in modern India, of course, co-terminates with westernisation. Urbanisation as a social process in modern India is western in concept legacy of the colonial rule. It is during the colonial days that different types of towns, such as cities, industrial townships, cantonments, hill stations, etc. came into existence at the initiatives of the British rule. It was primarily, due to serve their colonial interests of course, it would be simplistic to state that, towns or cities in India were exclusively British creations. The British gave a new lease of life to a number of existing towns, and in some cases, they had re-shaped, recreated the existing old town by superimposing the new administrative structure on them.

In the north-eastern region of India, systematic study of urbanisation has been carried out, although urbanisation in the modern context has been an active social phenomenon in this part of India also. In the field of urban study in north-east India, the study is restricted to the hill cities and the situation of hill cities are quite different from that of the plains. In the southern part of Assam, there are three hill cities namely Haflong, Maibong and Diphu, and four towns in the plains namely Karimganj, Badarpur, Hailakandi and Silchar. Karimganj is a traditional
town which had its antecedent in its Sylhet connection in the pre-colonial days, while Badarpur is simply a railway town. Hailakandi was one of the oldest Sub-Division of Cachar constituted on 1st June, 1869 A.D.

Silchar is the only place in the district which has any pretensions to the name of town. It is situated on the left bank of the Barak in 240, 49/n and 930, 48/ and commands a charming view down the river, which is dotted with the sails of native crafts and lined with groves of the areca palm, while, a little to the north, the purple hills of North Cachar rise sharply from the plain. Silchar, the headquarters of the district of Cachar is the most important town of Barak Valley situated in the southern plains of Assam.

With the growth of the tea industry from 1855 A.D., onwards, Silchar became an important centre for trade and commerce. The result was that there was influx of population from outside. And in 1882 A.D., a Station Committee was formed in Silchar. The first meeting of the Station Committee was held on 26th February, 1882 A.D., with presence of 12 members. In 1893 A.D., the Station Committee was converted to Second Class Municipality. With the formation of municipality Silchar started to grow as an urban centre.

The strategic location of Silchar, its accessibility from Sylhet, availability of land and labour, approach routes to neighbouring hills and prospects of riverine commerce might have impelled Captain Fisher, the Superintendent, to identify Silchar as the headquarters. Treasury, Kutchery, Jail and an outpost for Sylhet Light Infantry were immediately constructed. The sites for offices and residential quarters were located in Sadarghat, which also emerged as a transit station, while the jail and the police outpost were constructed in Fatak Bazar. The remaining portions of Janiganj were allotted to the officers and the traders. However, the mirasdar of Ambicapur asked for compensation. Captain Fisher referred the matter to the Government of Bengal for consideration. The Government directed Captain Fisher to pay compensation for such area which was required for official use. Accordingly, the Superintendent paid compensation for two hals of land and he directed the amlas and the traders to pay for their respective private holding at a rate of rupees 18 per hal. The total area of Janiganj was then 23 hals. This was how
the urban beginning of Silchar. The office of the Superintendent remained in the Burmese fort at Dudpatil till 1860 A.D.

During the administration of the successor of Captain Fisher, the urban development of Silchar moved in a faster speed. Jhalupara, Tarapur and Malugram areas were included within the town. Urban land settlements and development of civic amenities get importance under the patronage of Captain Stewart (1857-67 A.D.). In 1835 A.D., Captain Fisher established a medical centre which was raised to the status of civil hospital in 1864 A.D. Stewart also established some schools and markets. John Edgar (1867-72 A.D.) the successor of Stewart prepared a blue print for the planned development of Silchar town. Edgar divided the whole town into several sectors, and metalled the roads. Under his supervision a large number of office buildings, residential quarters, circuit house and the Deputy Commissioner’s office were constructed. The constructions were facilitated by the establishment of the District level Public works department. The jail was shifted from Fatak Bazar to the present site, and the native traders from Sylhet, Dacca and other places were encouraged to settle down in Fatak Bazar, Sadarghat areas on favourable terms of land holding. The district headquarters was connected by roads with interiors of the district. In Sadarghat and Annapurnaghat, ferry services were introduced with Rangpur and Dudpatil respectively. In 1852 A.D., the head post office was established at Silchar and the daily mail services were maintained with Hailakandi, Katigorah and Haflong. Between Sylhet and Silchar a daily mail service was also introduced. The telegraph facility was added to the Silchar head post office in 1861 A.D. Steamer service between Calcutta and Silchar via East Bengal was introduced by General Steam and Navigation Company in 1850 A.D. The steamerghat area became the busy and bubbling part of the town. With the beginning of British relation with Lushai Hills, Silchar became important as a commercial and administrative station. The Superintendent who later on came to be known as Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was responsible for maintaining political relations with Lushai Chiefs. During the period from 1870-1890 A.D., a series of military expeditions were despatched from Silchar against the Lushai Chiefs. To deal with the problems of the neighbouring hill tribes effectively, the headquarters of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion and the office of the
Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Divisions were established in Silchar. As a result from the strategic and military point of view Silchar also became important. The cantonment area in the heart of the town was considered as a special area and the sports facilities developed in the town.

For the urban land settlement in 1859 A.D., though Steward granted rent free patta to the occupants for 20 years, but later on cancelled it. Again in 1871 A.D., a fresh settlement was made for 30 years. At the rate of the one rupee and eight annas per acre, 23 acre of total area was assessed. However, land annexed to buildings as compound and pleasure ground was assessed at Rs. 10/- per acre. The Central Road, Nazirpatty, Premtola, Tulapatty or Narshingtola emerged as flourishing localities between these settlements. Tarapur, Malugram and Itkhola were among the old settlements. The families of Kamini Kumar Chanda and Mohesh Chandra Dutta shifted themselves from Tarapur and laid the settlement called Ukilpatty. Among old residents, Kalimohan Deb belonged to Tarapur and Baikunta Chandra Gupta to Malugram.

In the beginning, the British could not realise the importance of Silchar and established it as cantonment town. “When the British annex Cachar and established Sadar Station at Silchar they could not thought of its importance except from military point of view. If they could realise it, then they might annex it much earlier than the Burmese war. In the beginning their only purpose was to use Silchar as base of their political and military control over the entire southern part of the north-east India leading up to Manipur, Mizoram (Lushai Hills) even up to Burma and beyond. That is why in the beginning, under the control of the British, Silchar emerged as a cantonment town. During that period major part of Silchar was comprised of hillock and jungles. Hillock went to the control of army and other offices along with Sadar court also grew up”.

In 1834 A.D., Captain Fisher in one of his records mentioned that there did not exist any provision either public or private in any part of Cachar. At that period there was no municipality. But in the Superintendent’s Office there was a municipal branch. There was no facility of water supply or drainage. Only five or seven street lights of kerosene were there. Roads were very narrow.
Tarapur was a ward of the Silchar Municipality since its inception. The advent of Assam-Bengal Railways whose terminus extended upto Tarapur and river side also. Most of the renowned pleaders like Kamini Kumar Chanda and Mohendra Chandra Dutta and also few other inhabitants had to abandon their habitation from river side and to shift to other areas as the land was to be acquired by the railway. This had indirectly affected the trade and commerce of the Ukil Bazar. The army cantonment grew up covering 395 bighas from Tarapur to cemetery Road (Present Vivekananda Road), Itkhola and Public works Department. Cantonment authority did not permit any patient or any vehicle carrying waste to pass through the area. That is why, in 1893 A.D., Tarapur was excluded from Municipality and handed over to cantonment. Though a condition was made to develop the area by Cantonment, but practically it did nothing.

With the growth of population in Tarapur, people started demanding to include it within Municipality. But till 1898 A.D., Kamini Kumar Chanda who was the Vice-Chairman of the Municipality opposed the inclusion due to financial scarcity. In the meeting of the Board, held on 18th June 1898 A.D., Kamini Kumar Chanda explained the inclusion of Tarapur as heavy burden of expenditure on Municipality. Almost all the pleaders, Mukteers and amlah have left the place. But he also justified his view for inclusion of Tarapur not from financial point of view, but because of the neglected attitudes of cantonment authority.

But the proposal was rejected by 7-2 votes. In the meeting of the Board, held on 21st November, 1903 A.D., again a proposal was raised for inclusion of Tarapur within Municipality. Because Deputy Commissioner clarified that if Tarapur included within the Municipality than the expenditure for development and fill up of the low land area to be bear by the lease holders. Moreover for expenditure after inclusion, Government would grant loans.

Therefore, though there were some administrative and financial difficulties in the inclusion of Tarapur within Municipality, but the Municipality on certain conditions agreed to the inclusion. The conditions were as follows:

1) Provincial Government was to grant Rs. 2500/- for construction of latrine, engrave pond and street light.
2) To fill up all low lands before the inclusion of Tarapur in the Municipality.
3) Municipality was to get consent for imposition of taxes on railway quarters.
4) Public Works Department was to take after that portion of Trunk Road which was included within Municipality.

For the inclusion of Tarapur within Municipality, a sub committee was formed. Vice-Chairman, Civil Surgeon, Mohesh Chandra Dutta and Govinda Choudhury were the member and the committee gave certain proposals. The proposals were as follows:

a) To demarcate the areas of Tarapur to be included within Municipality.
b) To demarcate places for wells or ponds.
c) To demarcate the places for Government latrines.
d) Miscellaneous.

The proposals are passed by 6-2 votes. And on 1st January, 1906 A.D., Tarapur was officially included with the Silchar Municipality.

During that period there were many big fields within the town. Among these Municipality ground was one of them where the modern Abhyacharan Patshala is situated. District Sports Association and Police parade ground were under the control of the British which were used for Horse race.

The big sizes horses belonged to the European in the tea garden started to gather in the town from mid December for horse race. The horses were kept in the municipal ground and other ground under the sheds built with grass. The Europeans with their families also used to stay by the side of these shed in the huts built with bamboo and grass. This was the camp life of the Europeans Europeans used to celebrate Christmas with pomp and gory in those days.

Silchar, the Sadar, i.e. principal station of Cachar District, is a small place boasting only of a few brick buildings including the kutcherry or court house and the church. There is a large native bazaar, the house is which, as well as those of the most of European residents, are built of bamboo and mud. There are two large European shops, which taking advantage of the necessities of the troops that composed the Europeans raised their prices enormously. They had no fixed scale, but the price of their goods were raised when the demand for them become much greater than usual. An article which could be obtained on our arrival at Cachar for
one rupee, commanded four rupees during the fortnight or so in which the place was occupied by our troops.

It is a very quite little station, and such an exciting event as the passing through of so many troops, lifted it entirely out of its normal state of level dullness; and let us make hay while the sun shines, was apparently the motto adopted by all classes of shop-keepers, European as well as native.

In 1882 A.D., when Sadar station was constituted in Silchar, almost all the houses were made of thatches and bamboo. In the Janiganj area the houses were thickly constructed and in case of fire damages were great. When Silchar was constituted into Municipality, the board passed an order to replace the thatch and bamboo by tin. But the order was not fully implemented. When Harbart was the Deputy Commissioner, at his initiatives the constructions of bamboo and thatch houses were prohibited. There were large numbers of ponds within the town, and in case of fire there was no scarcity of water. “The town itself has a somewhat tumble-down appearance, and, with the exception of the Church and the new circuit house, does not contain a single building of any size or dignity. The houses of Europeans stand round a piece of open ground, which becomes very wet and swampy in the rains. The business quarter lies a little to the South, but there are few substantial merchants in Silchar. There is a considerable trade in rice, European piece-goods, timber and other forest produce. Tea boxes are manufactured by native firms, and there is a small printing press, at which a vernacular paper is published. As in most of the other towns in Assam the bulk of the population is of foreign birth. Silchar was constituted a municipality under Act V (B.C.) of 1876 A.D., in 1893 A.D. There are twelve commissioners, eight of whom are non-officials and are elected, while four are nominated and two hold office, ex-officio. The principal tax imposed is one ranging from 6½ to 7½ percent, on the annual value of holdings…..much of the municipal revenue has been raised, the fees levied in the market, at the ferry and from grants from other funds. The total area of Silchar is 2.4 square miles, and it is served by 18 linear of roads, 10 of which are metalled. The town is lighted by 998 lamps, and there are three reserved tanks and four wells from which drinking water can be obtained. At the arrival of the German Salvatorians in Assam there were little town of Silchar about twenty
English speaking Catholics……….. they gathered from time to time in the house
of an army major for prayer meetings. In 1896 A.D., their number increased to
thirty with the arrival of some Catholic soldiers. In the same year a chapel was
built at Silchar and dedicated to the sacred heart of Jesus. Every third Sunday in
the month, the missionary went from Bondashil to Silchar to hold Church services.
The distance from Bondashil to Silchar is thirty five kms. Before the railway from
Badarpur to Silchar it was really fatiguing to go there every Saturday. The
steamers during the winter were very irregular and could not be relied upon. Now
and then a horse was lent to the missionary for a part of the way. Generally he had
to go on foot. In the cold season, if it did not rain and the road was full of dust. The
heat too was intolerable and one longed for a drink of water. But the water of the
river was very dirty and dangerous to drink, and it was not easy to get water from
the people since the caste system was very strong here.

In the last part of the 19th century, the main problem within the town was
the sanitation problem. With the growing population and in the absence of any
concrete sanitary the problems were how and where to clear the wastes. Naga
labours were brought from Manipur for this purpose. Many proposals and plans
were made to solve the problems, though none of them were implemented, but it
was clear that the Municipality had concern and was very much alert to solve the
problem. Goldighi, a big tank of Silchar is the eye witness of many events. On 15th
April, 1901 A.D., in a meeting of municipality, a resolution was adopted for the
beautification of the tank which was known as Chakla pukur. Failing to get consent
of the proprietor of the tank on 11th December 1902 A.D., in a meeting of
municipality again a decision was taken to purchase the tank. Accordingly on 9th
February 1903 A.D., a sub committee was formed for the beautification of the
tank. Under this committee Chakla pukur was converted to Goldighi which
European officers used for angling. The site of Goldighi was used for meeting
during freedom movement and also for performance of theatres and dramas during
the winter seasons. The preparations were in the process for a country-wide non-
vviolent and non co-operation movement in the end of 1929 A.D. Unfortunately, in
June that year, Surma Valley was struck by a disastrous flood and Cachar was
worst affected. About three fourth of the people were rendered homeless and had
to take shelter in the hill-tops. Silchar town had been completely submerged, in some places there was five to ten feet water. The public leaders had, therefore, to engage themselves to the service of the people. The Cachar-Sylhet Relief Committee, formed with Brojendra Narayan Choudhury as the Secretary, organised condemnable relief work. Both official and non-official came forward. The students and teachers of the Silchar Government High School and their Boy Scouts worked round the clock, taking the people to the camps and attending them. The judge, Sub-Judge and Magistrate in Cachar were all engaged in relief work. The Cachar Relief Committee was formed under the joint Presidentship of the Divisional Commissioner and Kamini Kumar Chanda. Attempts were made to raise funds. The Government sanctioned gratuitous relief and agricultural loans. The local unit of the Ramkrishna Mission opened a Relief Fund and appealed for contributions. Bipin Chandra Pal went up to Bombay to collect funds. The charity shows and matches were organised in various parts of Bengal and the proceeds were handed over to the relief Committee.

The first political meeting to preach the gospel of patriotism by Bipin Chandra Pal was held at Silchar at the courtyard of famous businessman Dinanath Dutta's house. "Perhaps no political meeting was held at Silchar before the meeting of Bipin Chandra Pal. The meeting was held at the open courtyard at the house of Dinanath Dutta. Though the gathering of people was not so large like modern days but volunteers were required to control the gatherings. The volunteer organisations were formed under the leadership of Late Radhakrishna Pande, Late Kedar Nath Sen, and Kamini Kumar Kar. Brojendra Ganguly of Mymansingh also accompanied Bipin Chandra Pal to Silchar, who sang a patriotic song at the meeting which created great patriotic enthusiasm among the people."

In June 1929 A.D., a devastating flood paralysed the normal life of the people in Silchar.

It appears on that Thursday not only the Silchar town but almost the whole Cachar district was like a sea. Sometime the half drowned houses looked like islands in middle of the sea. The limited places which were above the water level and where people could take shelter were circuit House, Commissioner's bungalow, Cantonment, Jail Compound, Normal School and court compound. Within the
whole town there were about 5 to 7 multi-storeyed buildings where hundreds of flood affected people took shelter. The result was that these buildings were about to broke down due to over weight. In this critical situation with the rise of water level there was danger of drowning in the water on the one hand and on the other hand scarcity of dirking water. Most of the people started preparing themselves for their last journey. The only source of water supply in the bazar area was the Tulapatty tank belonging to Babu Surendra Nath Sen. And this was reported by Judge Edglay to higher authority.

Though it is not clear who gave the permission for establishing a bus stand by the side of the Goldighi but within a short period the whole area went under the control of bus drivers. In those days these drivers were very enthusiastic also who named it as Premtola because in this area a number of prostitutes used to live in huts. But with the establishment of the electric supply company, they were uprooted. And within a short period the place became useful for ordinary people to live.

Gradually some shops were opened on both sides of the road. Slowly Premtola went fully under the control of drivers who started performing Durga Puja by constructing a temporary shed. Now the Durgamandap is a permanent concrete structure. In those days there was large gathering of people by the side of Goldighi to enjoy dramatic performance.

On the right hand side of the road from Premtola to Hospital there were a few small shops and residences of some aristocrat families. It was here Bakshi brothers first established their stationary shop which may be the first of its kind in the town. When the shop was destroyed by fire they again constructed another shop on the opposite side of the road. Up to Lochan Bairaghi Road, there was nothing important except few shops. By the side of the main road a few daily labourer and cobbler used to live in thatched sheds. And among them lived a family of potters who earned their livelihood by making idols. Dharika Paul, a member of this family was an expert in making idols which looked like living beings. He was also expert in painting. Lochan Bairaghi road separated Akhra from Bil. Practically the bil (Bigponds) was full of lotus flower in each and every
season. There were also poisonous snakes and often people had to deal with the danger of snake biting whenever they made attempts to collect beautiful flowers.

Near the bil was Mahut para, and though it was thickly populated but its surroundings were almost depopulated. No important establishment were there by the side of the road which connected bil with Akhra at Bilpar and turned towards Hospital road. Though some people lived near Akhra, but up to Rangirkhari there were open paddy field. At that time common people did not have a favourable impression about hospital. The hospital was under the charge of a Civil Surgeon. And under him were Assistant Surgeon, Sub Assistant Surgeon, Compounder and dresser. Hospital was neat and clean. But people were not willing to go to hospital except under extra-ordinary circumstances. Both outdoor and indoor unit were there at Silchar Hospital. At the outdoor big glass jars were filled with coloured mixtures which were sold to the people at a price of one ana from the Compounder of the hospital. These mixtures were of different colours and of peculiar tastes and doctors had tremendous faith on their efficiency.

At the other corner of the town was Malugram and it is said that town was originated from this area. At Aryapatty, there was the Hid Engineering which was supervised by an English man. It was in a flourishing condition. After Hid Engineering Works is the Malugram area. Steamerghat-Aryapatty Road crossing Shivbari, Ganiala and Itkhola joined modern Trunk Road. But the road by the side of the Baikunta Chandra Gupta’s residence was submerged in the river. Now a days, it is impossible to imagine the course of the river Barak and where was the road. Though a portion of the steamer office still existed but there are no trace of labour barrack, the quarters of Babus, storage house of coal and the show rooms. The courtyard where thousands of people assembled for the first political lecture of Bipin Chandra Pal also disappeared with the soil erosion of river Barak.

Slowly and gradually, a large area including the alluvial land near the residence of Baikunta Chandra Gupta was gobbled up by the river Barak. A new road was constructed behind the house of Baikunta Chandra Gupta. This road is connected with the road by the side of Rahmanbari. From this area up to Maduramukh there were many aristocrat families and some of these families are still surviving. In between the large area of the saw mill of Rahmanbari and
Madhuramukh, there was a large agricultural farm. The farm no longer exists and the area becomes a human habitat gradually.

After the coming of the British as there was no motor cars or cycles people mainly had to travel on foot. Rich people used to travel either on palanquin or used to ride horses. Silchar was a cantonment town and military goods were mostly carried with the help of elephants. The timber merchants also carried timbers with the help of elephant. Unlike modern days motor vehicle accident, in those days there was danger of loss of lives under the feet of elephants. The Government elephants were kept at modern Tikarbasthi and in Government records the place was named as Pilkhana. In the records of the municipality, it is evident that Rate-payers Association used to appeal to Municipality to make time limit for the movement of elephants. And municipality on its parts used to appeal to military authorities through Deputy Commissioner for time limit. But most probably it did not work. Because, frequently this problem was discussed in the meetings of the Municipality. Originally Silchar was a village and therefore had no roads suitable for motor vehicles. May be there was no necessity of such road due to absence of any motor vehicles. Within the town, was only pathways. Very limited people used to ride horses. In 1853 A. D. in the General report of the District, it was written “It (Silchar) is a small place, there being, but one street, containing about one hundred native shops and houses all made of bamboos and grass”.

After the coming of the British, with the establishment of market at Janiganj a road was built there. Among the roads of Silchar town which were built in the beginning, the Tarapur road was one. Starting from station, it turned left and passing through the modern railway station it was connected with main road near patrol pump. Trunk road, Club road and present Gandhibag road passing across present India club road connected with cantonment Road near Petrol pump. The main and only road worth mentioning was the one running from present Indian Airlines Office via Narshing School and Hospital Road up to Rangirkhari. It is very surprising to note, that the most busy road of present Silchar, i.e. the Central Road was a very small and narrow in those days. The importance of the road increased in the 20th century when it was named Central Road.
In 1885 A.D., a road was constructed at Tikarbasthi known as Pechai Mia Road. Before the metalling of the road, due to the problem of dust Municipality make arrangement to sprinkle water on the road. The metalling of road was first done in 1898 A.D., and that was Hospital Road. In the same year foot path was built by the side of the road at Janiganj Bazar.

In the northern side of the town, there was no road except Itkhola road, Malugram road and eastern part of Nutanpatty during that period. When the town extended towards north the proprietor of Johnsmeal Company and municipal dwellers of Malugram requested municipality to connect Nutanpatty Road with Itkhola Road. This proposal was granted in the meeting of the board held on 5th December 1906 A.D., along with a proposal to excavate a tank for drinking water between Nutanpatty and Recreation ground. In 1907 A.D., after the establishment of Public Works Department it constructed and maintained many roads within the municipality area. In 1907 A.D., from the turning of Dewanji Bazar and Janiganj passing through the front of Thana a road was built. Measures were taken to improve the road condition when Kamini Kumar Chanda was Chairman. Among the roads were Janiganj Road, Municipal Road, Cachari Road, Janiganj Public Latrine Road, Kalibari Road, Shillongpatty road, Pechai Mia Road, Jhalupara Road, Ambicapur Latrine Road, Malugram Road, Itkhola road, Madhurbond Approach Road, Tarapur Latrine Approach and Road within Khas Bazar.

In 1927 A.D., and in 1929 A.D., as a result of devastating flood most of the roads were damaged. Government sanctioned a grant of Rs. 20,000/- to municipality for flood victims as well as to repair the roads.

During the Chairmanship of Rukmini Kumar Das, he took different measures to maintain the roads under Municipality. In the proceedings of Municipality dated 2nd November, 1931 A.D., there were records of 61 roads under Municipality. The total lengths of these roads were 12 miles and of this 11½ miles was gravel road and ½ mile was kaccha. Till that period Public Works Department had not built any concrete road. Before Independence Malugram road was under Municipality and the road was like a village road. In November 1946 A.D., Municipality handed over the road to Public Works Department.
After Independence during the tenure of 1953 A.D. board, with the increase in number of motor vehicles the speed limit was made 20 miles for the safety of people, in 1963 A.D., a new road was built which connected Old Aryapatty Road with Nutanpatty and named Romesh Shome Road as his wife donated some money for the road.

When Silchar was established as Sadar Station by the British, it became the seat of all district office. Therefore in search of jobs and livelihood in these offices besides the European officers many people from Sylhet and other places started migrating to Silchar. Most of them were appointed in the post of clerk, Munshi, daftari, Stamp Bhandari, Nakalnabish. In the Government records of 1836 A.D., the names of this posts were mentioned. In the civil and criminal branches of judiciary, revenue and survey of land records mention about the names of 84 employees. In the records of 1835-36 A.D., the other posts mentioned were Muhuri, Nazir, Sweeper, peons, borkondaj, Mulla, Bromman, Daftari, Cooli, Khajanchi, English writer, Native Surveyor. Besides the outsiders, employees were also recruited from Ambicapur, Dudpatil, Kanakpur, Madhurbandh.

Abundance of land and other resources of the province, together with the increase of employment facilities under the new regime, attracted new comers from the adjacent districts of Bengal and Sylhet. This people had no formal degree of Law and they used to earn their livelihood by doing minor works in different branches of administration especially in the judiciary. They were the babus of Cachar in the 19th century25.

Tea industry developed in Cachar from 1855 A.D., and in consequence Silchar town was developed as a whole sale tea market. From Silchar, tea was exported to different places including England. So trade and commerce started to develop in Silchar town with the development of tea industry. When the town started to expand many shops were established.

After Independence Silchar became largest metropolis in South Assam and the most important inter-state town of north-east India. It is the only city where five of the seven sister states of the north- east meet. Silchar is on the southern extremity of Assam while Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura are within 20 to 60 km from the city and in respective directions. The international border
with Bangladesh is also about 30 km. Therefore from communication and trade and commercial point of view Silchar may be regarded as the gateway to the neighbouring states and districts.

This is how Silchar developed into an urban centre. The growth was slow but steady and the process received a boost after the partition of the country in 1947 A.D., to become the non-official capital of the Barak Valley. Our objective would be to assess the role of the local municipality in this process.

**Notes and references:**

8. Banerjee, S.C., Note on the Re-Assessment of The Town Lands in Silchar, 1900, in 1883 Silchar Town was surveyed cadastral.
9. Assam Gazette Notification No 9642 G dt. 27th Oct, 1892 A.D.


17. The Bengalee, (news paper) 18, 19, 20, 22 and 3 June, 1929.

18. Ibid., 2 July, 1929.

19. Ibid., 5 July, 1929.

20. Ibid., 13 June, 1929.


22. Ibid., 2 July, 1929.

23. Ibid., 2 February, 1930.
