Chapter 2
FIELD OF THE STUDY

Silchar is the district headquarters town of Cachar district. Silchar has emerged as a major urban centre in the South Assam over a period of more than a century and a half. The urbanization process of Silchar started with the administration of Captain Fisher in 1832. The Silchar Municipal Board was constituted with 30 members out of which 28 were elected from the 28 Wards of the Municipality and 2 were nominated by the Government of Assam. The town is a processing centre for tea in the country. The availability of transport and communication facilities includes one of the most significant assets of Silchar town. The road transport facilities are provided by the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) and private operators. The existing road transport network mentioning private Line bus, State Government bus, city bus, tourist maxi cab, private line vehicle like Sumo/Cruiser/Winger etc. are the important means of communication regularly busy in providing services outside the Silchar town. The railway station located at Tarapur was established in 1902. The airport is located at Kumbirgram about 22kms from Silchar town. Besides, there are 10 ferries in Silchar town which have played a significant role in communicating the distant rural areas from Silchar town. The Assam Bengal Railways brought Silchar on the Indian Railway map in 1899. Many Government and Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes are available at Silchar town which provide health care facilities to the people of Barak Valley and outside. The State Government first started the third Medical College and Hospital of Assam at Ghungoor, the southern part of Silchar town. There are many educational institutions in and around Silchar town. The Government recognised reputed and private institutions are like Guru Charan College, Cachar College, Women’s College, Radha Madhav College, Silchar Polytechnic College, National Institute of Technology (NIT), Silchar, Arun Kumar Chanda Law College, Teachers Training College, Centre for Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), Assam University, Silchar, Junior Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools and other various High, Middle and Primary Schools. The law and order of the town is regulated by the Civil Court, police service and military services. There is a traffic branch of police for controlling the vehicular traffic in the town.
Silchar has its origin, growth and development from a cantonment of the British to the present status of a populated town. The English rulers settled their administration at Dudhpatil, on the north bank of the river Barak after the annexation of Cachar by the British in 1832. They shifted their colony to the villages of Silchar, after few years, Tarapur and Malugram on the south bank for security and administrative expediency. Mainly, there was a military security force to look after the frontiers and contain the tribal reels.

During the British rule, ships were placed at the bank of the river Barak. So, a market developed at the bank and it became a major place of economic activity. The bank was full of stones to help dock ships and vessels and the market was developed at this place which was fully covered with stones. People started to refer to the place as “Shiler Chor” that means the bank of stones. Gradually, Shiler Chor became Silchar for linguistic simplification. Dr. Manjuvendra, a leading citizen of this town said that Silchar has been derived from the bank of the river Barak that was strewn with stones called ‘shila’. He said, “This town has a glorious heritage and tradition in respect of education, freedom struggle, literature, drama, women-liberation movement, sports and journalism.’’

Silchar is situated at an altitude of 27 meters above sea level at a latitude 25.8° North and longitude 93.15° East. The climate is moderate and the average annual rainfall is 2400 mm. (Sekhar Chakravarty and D. Dutta 2003:120). It is also located on the left bank of the river Barak between 24°49 North latitude and 92°48 East longitudes. It has a geographical area of 15.78 square kilometres. The average ground level of Silchar town is about 19.80 metres above the sea level and is situated at a distance of 640 kilometres from the sea (Dey 1998: 51). The town is located on a flat land, but there are many elevations and depressions within the town. The Tikarbasti is the highest elevated point of 26.7 metres followed by Railway Station of 23.3 m., Municipal area of 22.9 m., Central Road of 22.2 m. and Hospital Road of 21.8 m. While the low lying areas are Malinibeel of 13-14 metres, Malugram of 18 metres, Padma Beel of 19.4 m and Link Road of 21 m. The river Barak has deposited different layers of shales and mud which have formed the hard sub-soil of the town. The sub-soil forms a thick cover of mudstone that restricts the downward percolation of water for which there is heavy rain-off of water during the normal rainy days (Singh 1998: 16). The soil of Silchar town is the mixture of alluvium, sandy and muddy loam superimposed upon stones, gravels and conglomerates. Silchar town has the tropical humid climate as similar to the general climate of the Barak Valley region. At Silchar town, the wind generally blows from the northeast in the morning and from the southeast in the afternoon. The town experiences
maximum temperature of 32.97º C in August and minimum of 9.18º C in January. Normally, the temperature starts to rise from March and reaches the climax either in July or August. The minimum temperature of the town ranges between 9.10º C and 11.10º C (District Agriculture Office, Cachar, Silchar). The humidity of the air varies between 92.8% and 97.5% which is maximum and 47.5% to 76.7% which is minimum. During the months of June, July and August the high temperature accompanied with the high humidity makes the climate suffocating. About the end of February, stormy weather sets in and in March there are often thunderstorms and soon the water level starts rising in the river Barak. The danger levels of Annapurnaghat and Lakhimpur are 19.83 metres and 23.88 metres respectively. The annual rainfall exceeds 3000 millimetres although it was 3394 millimetres in 1930. Generally, the rainfall is maximum in the months of May, June and July (Singh 1998: 19). In the three decades, Silchar town and the Barak Valley have been ravaged by three major floods in 1986, 1999 and 2004. Silchar town is also a seismic area and experienced earthquakes very often due to Shillong as the epicenter. The earthquake of 31 December, 1984 with its epicenter in Sonai near Silchar was felt very strongly causing moderate damage to residential structures and 13 persons lost their lives while hundreds of people injured (Dey 1998: 28). The Silchar town of Cachar district is vulnerable to the natural disaster like floods, cyclones, earthquakes, hail storm, etc.

The Silchar city is the gateway of three districts of Barak Valley as well as Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur. The town is surrounded by the Barail Hills on the North, Mizo Hills on the South, Manipur on the East and Bangladesh on the West (http://www.silcharwhere.html). Silchar was an unknown village before the coming of the British in Cachar. The Barak River originates from Barail Range of Naga Hills of Nagaland at an altitude of about 2,995 meters entering the plains of South Assam at 24° N latitude and 93° E longitude and leaves the plains of South Assam at 24° N latitude and 92° E longitude. The river bifurcates into Surma and Kushiyara Rivers while entering in Bangladesh. Several tributaries join the Barak from north and south. The Barak River valley is represented by a narrow E-W trending elongated alluvial filled basin and is located at the northern edge of N-S trending, fold ridges of the Indo-Burman frontal fold belt (Das 2012: 2110-2119). It passes through the Manipur Hills of Manipur state over a river length of nearly 400 kilometres. It then flows generally westward from Lakhimpur through the Cachar Plains region of Assam over a river length of approximately 130 kilometres to enter Bangladesh near Bhanga. Extensive areas of the floodplain lie at lower elevations than the tops of the adjacent riverbanks which have built up historically by overspilling and local deposition of sediments.
during flood periods (apart from being raised since the 1950s by construction of flood control embankments). Depressional areas (haors) within the floodplain form large expanses of water during the rainy season but dry out to form collections of ponds (beels) during the dry season. The combined dry season area of standing water is reported to have decreased from about 133 square kilometres in 1957 to 45 square kilometres in 1978, mainly due to sedimentation and appropriation for agricultural activities (NHC 2006).

During the Anglo-Burmese war, the Burmese forces entered Cachar from Manipur and Assam in 1824 and reached Dudpatil without crossing the river Barak. But the British army drove them out from Cachar and reinstated King Govinda Chandra, the last Kachari King, after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Lieutenant R. B. Pamberton was appointed with a group of troops to protect the King (Bhattacharjee 2007: 30-31). But the King was assassinated by a group of seditious persons with the help of some of his personal attendants on April 24, 1830 at Haritikar. In the absence of natural heirs, his territory lapsed to the British Government under the terms of the Treaty of Yandaboo of 1826. Captain Thomas Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar, was sent to take the charge of the territory with the power of a collector and magistrate and took over the charge on June 30, 1830 with headquarters at Cherrapunji which was shifted to Dudpatil and then to Silchar in 1833. Finally, the plain portion of Cachar was annexed to the British Dominion on August 14, 1832. Thus, the name Silchar was found to be used in the official documents after 1836 (Paulchoudhury 2007: 15). Silchar was connected by roads with the interior places of the district. The ferry services were introduced in Sadarghat and Annapurnaghat with Rongpur and Dudpatil respectively. After the establishment of the Head Post Office in Silchar in 1852, the telegraph facility was added to it in 1861. The General Steam and Navigation Company introduced the steamer service between Calcutta and Silchar via East Bengal in 1850s. But the launching of the tea-estates in 1855 at Borakhai of Cachar ushered in a new era in the socio-economic life of the Valley, after which Silchar town virtually became a planter’s town. The first polo club in the world was formed by the British tea planters at Silchar. Under the leadership of Captain Stewart, Silchar Polo Club came to be known as Retreat Club in the March of 1859 which is now known as Cachar Club. Gradually, India Club was introduced in 1900 which participated in the I. A. F. Competition. The headquarters of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion and the Office of the Commission, Surma Valley and Hills Division were set up in Silchar to deal with the problem of adjoining hill tribes effectively (Bhattacharjee 2007: 32).

Along with these development efforts, the urban land settlement was also paid attention. In 1859, Captain Stewart granted rent free patta to the occupants for twenty years which was
cancelled in 1871 and a fresh settlement was made with the actual occupants for thirty years. A total area of 23 acres was assessed at the rate of one rupee and eight annas per acre. The Central Road, Nazirpatty, Premtola, Tulapatty, Narshingtola, Tarapur, Malugram and Itkhola emerged as flourishing localities among these settlements. The major aspect of the process was that Silchar town was constituted into a Municipality under the Bengal District Town Improvement Act, 1864 on November 29, 1865 in order to manage its affairs. At that time, Cachar and Sylhet were districts in Bengal. The Silchar Municipality had eight European and three native members, including a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. In 1882, Silchar was constituted into a Station Committee under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1876. It had 15 members – 10 elected and 5 officials – and of the 10 elected members, 7 were government officers. However, the Silchar Station was elevated to the rank of Second Class Municipality on April, 1893 under the Bengal Act, 1876. Babu Kamini Kumar Chanda was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Silchar Municipality. It had 20 members which rose to 30 in 1930 (Bhattacharjee 2007: 32-33). Thus, with every change in government policy and the introduction of new policy the town experienced new changes.

The Demography

The demography of Silchar town demonstrates the growth of population – male, female and population below 5 years, literacy rate.

Table 2.1
Population Growth in Silchar Town between 1951 and 2011 (Percentage in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Annual Growth Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,15,483</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,42,199</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,72,710</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (web), Population Census India (web)

The table reveals that the population of Silchar town in 1951 was 34,000 persons which gradually increased to 1,15,483 in 1991, 1,42,199 in 2001 and 1,72,710 persons in 2011. The annual growth rate of increase in the population of the town from the year 2001 to 2011 is 2.1%.

Silchar town as the Urban Agglomeration constituents with a population above 100,000 as per 2011 census are shown in the table below:
As per provisional reports of Census of India, population of Silchar in 2011 is 172,709; of which males and females are 86,812 and 85,897 respectively. The sex ratio of Silchar city is 989 per 1000 males. In education section, total literates in Silchar city are 144,255, of which 74,082 are males while 70,173 are females. Average literacy rate of Silchar city is 91.74% of which male and female literacy was 93.97% and 89.5%. Total children (0-6) in Silchar city are 15,467 as per figure from Census India report on 2011. There were 7,977 boys while 7,490 are girls. Child sex ratio of girls is 939 per 1000 boys. Silchar city is governed by Municipal Corporation which comes under Silchar Urban Agglomeration. Although Silchar city has population of 172,709; its urban/metropolitan population is 228,985 of which 115,443 are males and 113,542 are females (http://www.census2011.co.in). The ward-wise distribution of population of Silchar Municipal Board according to 2011 Census is tabulated as under:

Table 2.3
Wardwise Distribution of Population of Silchar Municipal Board in 2011
(Percentage in Parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward Nos.</th>
<th>Population as on 2011 Census Provisional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 1</td>
<td>6402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 2</td>
<td>10200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 3</td>
<td>7808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 4</td>
<td>4875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 5</td>
<td>12508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 6</td>
<td>2224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 7</td>
<td>7782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 8</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 9</td>
<td>5742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 10</td>
<td>3690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 11</td>
<td>4149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 12</td>
<td>5535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 13</td>
<td>5368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 14</td>
<td>7334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 15</td>
<td>4037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 16</td>
<td>5775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 17</td>
<td>5985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 18</td>
<td>7325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 19</td>
<td>6566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 20</td>
<td>5145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 21</td>
<td>4697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 22</td>
<td>5225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward No. 23</td>
<td>3204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ward No. 24 6978  
Ward No. 25 7429  
Ward No. 26 6295  
Ward No. 27 8186  
Ward No. 28 10307  
Total 1,72,709

Source: Field Survey Conducted during the Period from 5th September 2011 to 7th March 2012

The table reveals that Ward No. 5 has the highest population of 12508 people followed by Ward No. 28 with its population 10307 and Ward No. 2 with 10200 people while Ward No. 8 is having the lowest population of 1938 people. Silchar town is a trade and processing centre for tea, rice and other agricultural products. Most of the people living in the outskirts of the town depend on farming and tea cultivation. There are 125 tea gardens in the Silchar region and many of them are producing the best tea in the country. The tea industry requires the supply of consumable and non-consumable goods for which Silchar is the ready-made market. Besides tea, oil and natural gas, bamboo, cane, etc. are the major contributors to Silchar’s economy (http://www.silchar.com/silcharpeople.html). There are no heavy industries in Silchar town, but there found to be 61 registered small and medium size industries like small scale candle, Hume pipe, Dalmut, match stick and brick industries. One of the important candle industry is Sabitri Candle Industries, Assam located at Subhash Nagar. It was set up in 2003.

The economic development of the town is also fueled by the establishment of 18 branches of various nationalized banks. They are the State Bank of India (SBI), Allahabad Bank, Central Bank of India, Assam Cooperative Apex Bank Limited, Cachar Gramin Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, United Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, UCO Bank, etc. Besides, new branches and private banks are found in the town (Telephone Directory 2003: 328-329). The establishment of multiplexes, such as Vishal Megha Mart and Big Bazaar has also paved the way for the business activities. Another multiplex/shopping mall, Goldighi Market Complex is under-construction at Premtola. The UFM Industries Ltd. at Meherpur and the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Silchar Branch are two industrial establishments in the town. The SBI, Silchar Branch started its journey in the town on 1 July, 1959 which has more than lakhs of customers under its service. The business and shops in Silchar town are Goldighi Shopping Mall, Big Bazaar, Vishal Mega Mart, Nahata Textile, Maa Anaandamoyee, Fashions and Saradamoni Textile. The hotels in Silchar town are Borail View Hotel, Park Road, Silchar; Hotel Rose Valley, Ukilpatty, Silchar; J. C. International Hotel, Circuit House Road, DSA Complex, Silchar; Riya Palace Hotel, Park Road, Silchar; Shatabdi Hotel, Ukilpatty, Silchar; Ellora Hotel, Club
Road, Silchar; Kanishka Hotel, Narshingtola, Silchar; Geetanjali Hotel, Club Road, Silchar; Krishna Hotel, Hospital Road, Silchar; Mohini Hotel & Restaurant, Park Road, Silchar; Silchar Tourist Lodge, Silchar; Hotel Kalpataru, Circuit House Road, Near AST Bus stand, Silchar; Indra Prastha Hotel, Lochan Bairagi Street, Silchar; Center Palace Hotel, Central Road, Silchar; Sharda Hotel, Narsingtola, N. N. Dutta Road, Silchar; Bani Hotel, Narshingtola, Silchar; Rambo Hotel, Rangirkhari Point, Silchar; Sankari Hotel, Central Road, Silchar; Swagat Hotel, Central Road, Silchar; Renu Hotel, Panthib, Silchar; Kusumananda Hotel, Tulapatty, Silchar and Anjali Hotel, Nazirpatty, Silchar.

Barak Valley Cements Limited, promoted by Bijay Kumar Garodia, Santosh Kumar Bajaj and Prahlad Rai Chamaria came as a Public Limited organization in the year of 1999 following the Companies Act of 1956. The promoters mentioned were the established and reputed business tycoons of North East India and they all have a great experience in the fields of timber, cement, concrete sleepers and plywood, etc. This company is situated in Assam and they concentrate their business operations in North Eastern Indian primarily. The manufacturing units of the company are located at Badarpurghat of Karimganj district, Devendranagar and Joom Basti. The Barak Valley Cements Limited is dominating the North Eastern market with product, which is marketed under the brand name of Valley Strong Cement. Big Bazaar started its business at Goldighi Shopping Mall, Central Road, Silchar, Assam. The Goldighi Mall was conceptualized by the former Silchar MLA and former Silchar Municipality Board Chairperson Smt. Bithika Dev which was inaugurated by her. By April 2013, Multiplex started its operations. The Entertainment Plaza started its operations in Janiganj area in Silchar town. This shopping complex has many things like Fun Zone and Mirch Masala Vegetable Restaurant which may entertain the residents of Silchar. A 180 seater single screen multiplex will (Gold Cinema) will start its operations at the top floor.

The development of different ICTs including traditional media in Silchar town will be analysing in the following:

I

THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Dhamail is a popular folk dance of Barak Valley, which was originated in Sylhet district of Bangladesh. Radha Raman Dutta (1833-1915), also known as Radha Romon, Bhaibe Radha Romon or Radha Raman, was an influential Sylheti folk music composer and poet from the Sunamganj District in Sylhet, Bangladesh. He is considered as the father of Dhamail folk dance and music. Dhamail is considered as a prime folk dance and music form. It is equally popular in places like Sylhet in Bangladesh and Silchar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, and Cachar.
in Assam. Dhamail dance is performed by a group of ladies. Ladies move in circle clapping their hands to the beat of the music. The songs are first sung by the leader and then the others join the chorus. The ladies wear sari in Bengali style while performing this dance form. The lyrics mainly relate to Shyam (Krishna) and Radha. Gradually the beat/tempo increases and finally reaches the crescendo. There are different lyrics of dhamail songs for marriages, annaprasan, Dol Purnima. In fact, every ritual of marriage has a different dhamail song. This dance form does not include any other instruments apart from hand claps and sometimes ‘karatal’ is used.

Various steps are being taken by government and non-government organization to revive and popularize the ancient art and culture. One such organization is Barak Upatyaka Banga Sahitya O Sanskriti Sanmilan (BUBSSS), an apex literary and cultural body in southern part of Assam which has initiated a detailed project to revive and popularize Dhamail.

The media scenario in Silchar has expanded a lot in the recent times. Dainik Jugasankha is one of the biggest dailies of the entire north eastern region today. Other newspapers, such as Samayik Prasanga, Dainik Prantojyoti and Dainik Janakantha are bringing out daily editions too. The Kolkata based Saradha Group also launched an edition of their Bengali daily Sakal Bela from Silchar. Karimganj also has a Bengali daily named Dainik Nababarta Prasanga. These newspapers are doing their bit to highlight the miserable plight of the common man. However, their reach is limited and confined to a specific area. Therefore, unless the national and state level media, especially electronic, start bothering about issues, it is difficult to give them prominence on a national platform.

After the establishment of All India Radio (AIR) Station, Silchar and the National Institute of Technology (NIT), the technological development has started in Silchar. The setting up of Doordarshan Kendra, Silchar and Cable TV has widened the cultural, socio-economic and the traditional values in the town. The computer is playing a very significant role in day-to-day life of the town. During 1990s, computer was introduced in Silchar town at BDPS Silchar centre, the first private computer institute of Silchar. After introducing computer in the town, the traditional type writer had been replaced by it. In the town, there are more than 47 computer institutes which provide technical education to both urban and rural people, including students, teachers and others. The first computer institute is National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT), a famous computer institute in Silchar town. The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), the Society for Information Technology Development (SITD), STG, BDPS etc. are available in Silchar town. The Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) machines have made the transfer of payment very easily. At present,
the SBI, UCO Bank, UBI, Bank of Baroda, Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of India, Canara Bank and AXIS Bank provide the ATM facility to the people of the town. The ECIL-ECIT Computer Centre imparts free service by arranging computer training programme for minority community with financial assistance from the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India (Telemart, a branch of BSNL Office, Silchar 2010).

The new ICT tools have fundamentally changed the way people of Silchar town communicate and gather information. They have produced significant renovations in education, business, service, agriculture and other fields. The emergence of the ICT as a tool of development in the town is shaping the society. Earlier the old communication technologies used to play the dominant role in the town. But with the advent of new communication technologies, everything is junction of several technologies. The newspaper of Silchar town are Sakalbela (Bengali daily), Samayik Prasanga (Bengali daily), Dainik Janakantha (Bengali), The Sentinel (English Newspaper), Dainik Prantajyoti (Bengali daily), Eastern Chronicle (English daily), Premabharati (Hindi) and Dainik Sonar Cachar (now defunct). The electronic media of the town are All India Radio (Silchar), Doordarshan Kendra (Silchar) and two Cinema Halls; namely, Oriental Cinema Hall and Devdoot Cinema Hall. The information and communication technologies in Silchar town are broadly categorized into two groups: old communication technologies and new communication technologies which are discussed under the following sub-categories.

II

THE EMERGING PATTERN OF BOTH OLD AND NEW ICTs

The new ICT tools have fundamentally changed the way of the people of Silchar town to communicate and gather information. They have produced significant renovations in education, business, service, agriculture and other fields.

1. **Old Communication Technologies/ Print Media**

   (i) *Newspaper*

Dainik Jugasankha, had began a Guwahati edition too. Dainik Jugasankha is the largest circulated Bengali Daily of Northeast India simultaneously published from Silchar, Guwahati and Dibrugarh. Dainik Samayik Prasanga is the newspaper from Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Naba Barta Prasanga is from Karimganj, Assam. Nababarta Prasanga is the Daily Bangla-language newspaper published in Karimganj, Assam. This newspaper is also available in Silchar, Hailakandi and Badarpur.

The print media started in Barak Valley as a part of the Surma Valley after the establishment of printing press at Silchar. The growth of printing press facilitated the progress of print media in this Valley. Babu Harekrishna Gupta first presented the printing press ‘Silchar Press’ to the people of Silchar in 1885. The first and the earliest known newspaper of Barak Valley was ‘Silchar’, a Bengali weekly. It was printed at Silchar press in 1889. It was edited by Babu Bidhu Bhushan Sen, popularly known as Bidhu Pandit, the teacher of Narshing Middle English School. Mahesh Chandra Dutta and Anand Mohan Gupta initiated its publication. But due to his unsparing and fearless writing against both officials and non-officials, Wilson, the D. P. I. discontinued the paper ‘The Silchar’ for a few years but it was revived in 1897 when Wilson left the office. The editor then resumed his columns and wrote on the demerits of the district authorities and the headmaster of Government High School. The headmaster sought permission of the D. P. I. to prosecute the editor but the Deputy Commissioner refused to recommend the exchange of the Assam Gazette with this paper. Untouchability was practised which reflects the contemporary social scene in Cachar. ‘Silchar’ was the only newspaper in Cachar in this century which played a commendable role in guiding public opinion and focusing attention on the social and political problems.

‘Surma’, another Bengali weekly, began its publication from the Aryan press in 1911 which played a very significant role in the freedom movement. The first editor was Pandit Chandraday Vidyavinode who was succeeded by Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnarva. The Aryan Trading Company was the owner and publisher of this paper. The paper was converted into a daily in 1914 and informed about the developments of the World War I including other events. It was discontinued in the twenties but again resumed its publication in the thirties under the editorship of Babu Nagendra Shyam, eminent lawyer of Cachar. Hurmat Ali Barlaskar edited it in the forties who edited another Bengali weekly; viz., Azad later on. The Surma played a prominent role in guiding the public opinion in Cachar and forced the government to take note of its views. Nagendra Chandra Shyam, Ashok Bijoy Raha, Ramendra Deshmukhya and Sudhir Sen were among the regular contributor in the literary pursuits of the paper.
Besides associated with ‘Surma’, Pandit Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnava edited ‘Janasakti’ and ‘Deshbarta’ from Sylhet. Before these, he was also associated with ‘Hitavadi’ and ‘Sadhana’ published from Calcutta and Dacca. He was an ardent nationalist and preached the Swadeshi spirit. He became the editor of ‘Surma’ in 1912 and edited it till its conversion into a daily in 1974. He was the editor of ‘Samay’ published from Silchar during that time (Das 1998). Babu Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnaba was also the editor of ‘Brahman Parishad Patrika’, a quarterly Bengali journal of Brahmanical philosophy which was first published on 24.4.1929. It was the organ of the ‘Silchar Brahman Parishad’. The ‘Brahman Parishad Patrika’ was published by Pandit Kalijay Nayapanchanan of Silchar with the objective of the social reform of the Brahman society. The Patrika could not continue after the first three issues. ‘Bhabishyat’, a Bengali monthly, appeared in 1926 with the editorship of Nogendra Chandra Shyam of Shillongpatty, Silchar and was printed at the Calcutta Printing Works, Calcutta and published from Ukilpatty of Silchar for few years. At that time, ‘Navoyug’, another monthly, was published from Silchar in April, 1920 under the editorship of Mohendra Nath Choudhury but continued for two years. Shiksha Sevak, a literary quarterly was published from Silchar in July 1925.

‘Manipuri’, a monthly newspaper in Manipuri came out during that time which began publishing from Silchar in 1939 with Samarjit Singh as its editor. It also started its Bengali publication later on. ‘Saptak’, a weekly newspaper, was published in 1937 from Silchar on every Wednesday. It was printed at Jayanti Press which contributed to the freedom movement of Barak Valley. Its editor was Kush Mohan Das who was succeeded by Gajendra Chanda Dutta. ‘Vijoyini’, the first newspaper edited by female emerged in 1940 which was also the organ of Silchar Mahila Samiti. Jotshan Chanda, wife of eminent educationist and leader Arun Kumar Chanda was its editor (Sarkar 2012).

Silchar was leading in the newspaper publications in Barak Valley before and after the Independence of India. The first daily newspaper of the Valley was published from Silchar which dominates till today.

After the 1947, many periodicals and daily newspapers contributed for the development of print media in Silchar. ‘Janasakti’ began its journey from Silchar after the Independence. Nistarun Gupta took the charge and shifted the newspaper to Silchar. Baidyanath Nath started ‘Muktripradip’, a bi-weekly in 1948 which stopped publication in 1949. ‘Arunodoya’ was started on 26.01.1950 with its editor Sunil Kumar Dutta Roy. Later on, Chandan Sengupta took over its charge in 1991 which has been still continuing its publication from the Arunodaya Press, Ullaskar Dutta Sarani, Silchar. ‘Prantojyoti’, the first daily of Barak Valley
came into existence. It was first started as bi-weekly by the name Jyoti on 12.1.1956 from Silchar with its founder editor Jotindra Chandra Dutta which became daily in 1964 and continued its publication till today. ‘Jugasankha’ as a weekly was first published on 17th Decemer,1950 from Silchar whose founder editor was Baidyanath Nath, a teacher, who also joined the freedom struggle and started the newspaper; viz., Muktipradip in 1948. After his death in 1970, his son B. K. Nath took over the charge during 1970s. It was converted into a daily in 1982 and associated with writers like Atin Das, Anadi Chakraborty and Jishu Chanda. It was shifted to Guwahati where it was the first Bengali daily. It continued up to 1989 due to the fire gutted the press and the building and machinery were destroyed. It resumed publication on off-set with computerized composing on 9th May 1995 and still continues. ‘Gati’, a bi-weekly, was started in 1966 with Dipendra Das as its editor which became daily in eighties with Jotin Deb Roy as its editor. The circulation of this newspaper is limited now-a-days. ‘Barak’, a bi-weekly, started in 1966 with the founder editor Golam Osmani but its charge was taken up by Atin Das 1983. ‘Prantiya Samachar’, a weekly, edited by Horendra Chandra Sen was started in June 1964. Subsequently, it became a bi-weekly on 2.10.1990 with its editor Ataur Rahman. Based on Lenin-Mao ideology, ‘Ahuti’, another bi-weekly, was published in August 1969 and was edited by Chandan Sen Gupta. But its publication was stopped due to the arrest of its editor in 1907. Kamalendu Bhattacharjee and Atin Das jointly brought out a daily named ‘Saphat’, in 1970-72 which was also discontinued. Concerning the problems of primary teachers a monthly newspaper was published in 1972 (Bhattacharjee 2002). ‘Sonar Cachar’ was started as a bi-weekly on May 1975 with Ranobir Roy as its editor and it became daily during the early eighties. It is the first publication adopting the off-set press in newspaper in Barak Valley. ‘Samayeek Upchar’, a weekly newspaper, was brought out by Swapan Dev on 05.03.1977. ‘Samayeek Prasanga’, another weekly, edited by Taimur Raja was started in 1977-78 and became bi-weekly and daily later on. ‘Cachar Times’, a Bengali weekly, was started on 12th September, 1977 under the editorship of Bhudev Bhattacharjee. After taking the charge by Deepan Dewanjee, it became a bi-weekly (Sarkar 2011).

During the eighties, different types of periodicals were brought out which is looked upon as the golden period of the newspapers in Barak Valley. ‘Anchalik Barta’ was started by Sajal Kanti Biswas on 12.01.1981. ‘Bartalipi’, a weekly, was started by Sanat Kairi in January 1985. ‘Abosan’, another weekly, was also edited by him but discontinued after six after months. ‘Sonar Desh’, a bi-lingual weekly, was begun on 31st Decemer 1982 which was edited by Pran Gopal Roy and became a bi-weekly on 4th July, 1992. ‘Barak Darpan’, a
Bengali fortnightly, was started on 25th December 1989 with its editor Babli Adhikari which became weekly on 5th January, 1990. Another Bengali daily of this period; namely, Silchar Times, was started as a bi-fortnightly on 1st January, 1991 which was edited by Sanat Kairi and it became daily on 14.4.1994. ‘Turjiya’, a weekly, edited by Samir Dey was started on 3.1.1983. ‘Maitrai Bani’, a bi-weekly was started by Soraj Kumar Das on 16.12.1989 which was taken over by Santosh Kumar Das. ‘Apanjan’ was started as monthly in 1989 and became daily in 1993 with its editor Pijush Kanti Das. It was discontinued in the mid of 1994. Besides, there are other newspapers; namely, Anjana by Nazrul Islam, Amar Barak, Barak Darpan and Matribhumi, etc. There are some fortnightlylies, such as Barak, Pally Darpan and Cachar Lipika. The Frontier Sun, a publication of Sonar Cachar Group, edited by Mridul Roy is English daily. Eastern progress, English monthly, edited by Pijyush Kanti Das was started in December 1996. Golden Energy Era, publication of Sonar Cachar group edited by Anita Roy and Oil Fields Times, publication of Jugasankha group are the two energy related weekly newspapers of Silchar (Das 1998).

The claimed circulation of newspapers published from Guwahati and Silchar Dainik Jugasankha is 76,709, Assam Tribune is 68,786, Gati is 36,000, Prantajyoti Dainik is 31,638, The Sentinel is 61,938, Ajir Dainik Batori is 5,041 and Silchar Times is 14,307 (Annual Statements Submitted by Publishers for 2007-08).

(ii) Magazines

Many periodicals and literary magazines were published in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. Bartaman, a Bengali weekly, started its publication from Silchar in 1930 under the editorship of Bhupendra Kumar Shyam. But it lasted for only three months. At that time, the Guru Charan College Majlis brought its handwritten magazine, ‘Kundakali’, in 1935 and Rabindranath Tagore sent his blessings for its success. The college magazine ‘Purbasree’ started publication from 1940. ‘Krishak’, a monthly newspaper covering agriculture came out in July 1937 under the editorship of Hurmat Ali and discontinued after two issues. ‘Chamak’, another fortnightly magazine emerged in 1939 which was edited by Bhupendra Chandra Shyam and brought out only nine issues. ‘Diganta’, another literary magazine, came out in 1940 which was edited by Parimal Purkayastha but discontinued after a few issues. Another weekly ‘Prachyabarta’, made its appearance in 1940 and was edited by Haresh Ranjan Bhattacharjee. It continued for three to four months. Under the editorship of Monomohan Mazumdar and Kadarnath Choudhury, Janashiksha, the mouth piece of Assam Education Department was published from Silchar in 1941.
Magazine is found since the pre-Independence era in Silchar but it was not very strong. No magazine could sustain for a long time since pre-Independence era. ‘Saptak’, a weekly magazine started in Silchar in 1937 is considered as the first magazine in Barak Valley. ‘Ahawan’ was started by Bijoy Chowdhury in 1950. ‘Ishara’ by Gulam Kibria was started in 1960 and lasted up to 1970 and ‘Kartik’ came out in 1965. ‘Atandra’, another magazine edited by Saktipada Brahmachari and Bimal Chowdhury, came out in 1965. Lubdhak, a magazine edited by Dinesh Lal Roy and Shatabdi by Atin Das was begun in 1966. ‘Shapath’ with its editor Kamalendu Bhattacharjee emerged in 1969. ‘Satakru’, a story based magazine with Tapodhir Bhattacharjee and Nikhilsh Bhattacharjee as editors came out in 1970. ‘Ityadi’ (1979) with Sujit Das, ‘Amader Samakal’ (1980), a revolutionary magazine, with Hitendra Bhattacharjee and Sanjib Kumar Das and ‘Pratisrot’ (1985) featured by literary works with Partha Pratim Mitra were started during 1970s and 1980s. During 1980s and 1990s, magazines were edited by many prominent ladies. Mention may be made of ‘Ma-Nishad’, a cultural magazine with Chabi Gupta as its editor, ‘Samachar’ with Dipali Dutta Chowdhury, ‘Mukul’, children’s magazines with Deepali Choudhury and ‘Chotoder Pata’, another children’s magazine with Dola Deb as its editor. ‘Kha’ (1990) with Soumitra Baishya, ‘Akshar’ from Silchar, ‘Kallipi’, a news magazine edited by Sandip Acharya and Param Bhattacharya (1996) were also published. The Bengali speaking people constitute a major segment of the population in Barak Valley, there is absent of Bengali news magazine published regularly. In order to cater to the need of the people of this region ‘Prasangik Kichu Kotha’ was started its publication from Guwahati as a small magazine in 1994. It was circulated in Silchar, Karimganj, Dharmanagar, Udharbond, Guwahati and Halflong. Pandulipi, a literary magazine edited by Parthajit Bhattacharjee was begun in November 1998 (Sarkar 2012).

(iii) Telecommunications

Telecommunication is the circulation of information for the purpose of communication over noteworthy distances. In earlier times, telecommunications involved the use of visual signals, such as, beacons, smoke and signal flags or audio messages via coded drumbeats or sent by loud whistles. According to TRAI Act, 1997, telecommunication service is defined to include services which are transmitted or received using wire, radio, visual or other electromagnetic means. Broadcasting services were included by way of specific Notification in 2004. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established and is governed by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997, to
regulate the telecommunications services and to protect the interest of service providers and consumers of the telecom sector, to promote and ensure orderly growth of the telecom sector and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. In the modern age of electricity and electronics, telecommunications now also includes the use of electrical devices; such as, telegraphs, telephones and teletypes, the use of radio and microwave communications, fiber optics and their associated electronics, the use of the orbiting satellites and the Internet. Telecommunications play an important role in sending information and messages in Silchar town. The whole telecommunications system in the town is divided into eight categories: personally, letter, speed post, telegraph, fax, courier, telephone and mobile phone and Internet. There are 52 sub-post offices with a head post office in the town. The sub-post offices were established from time to time and are located in the 28 wards of the town.

The head post office of Silchar was established in 1852 and the daily mail services were maintained with Hailakandi, Katigorah and Haflong. A daily mail service was also introduced between Sylhet and Silchar. In 1861, the telegraph facility was added to the head post office at Silchar. The head post office provides mail services through letter, speed post and telegraph facilities. The DTDC service provides mail services through fax and courier. The BSNL and other mobile service providers are such as Airtel, Aircel, Reliance, Vodafone, Tata Indicom and Idea provide telephone and mobile services. Now-a-days, the Internet is becoming a major source of information in the town. The local newspapers of Silchar are Dainik Jugasankha, Dainik Prantajyoti, Samayik Prasanga, Dainik Sonar Cachar (now defunct), Janakantha, Eastern Chronicle. Besides the local newspapers, national dailies like the Telegraph, Anandabazar Patrika, the Times of India, the Statesman etc. are also available in the town.

(iv) Radio

Radio is the transmission of signals by modulation of electromagnetic waves with frequencies below those of visible light (Rudolf 1974: 467). Electromagnetic radiation travels by means of oscillating electromagnetic fields that pass through the air and the vacuum of space. Information is carried by systematically changing modulating property of the radiated waves; such as, amplitude, frequency and phase or pulse width. When radio waves pass an electrical conductor, the oscillating fields induce an alternating current in the conductor. This can be transformed into sound or other signals that carry information. Radio broadcasting is a sound broadcasting service, transmitted over radio waves from a transmitter to a receiving
antenna. Stations can be linked in radio networks to broadcast common programming. Audio broadcasting also can be done via cable FM, local wire networks, satellite and the Internet.

The idea of a regular Broadcasting Service in India took shape for the first time in 1926, in the form of an agreement entered into between the Government of India and private company called the Indian Broadcasting Company Ltd. Under that agreement, a license for the constructions of two stations, one at Bombay and the other at Calcutta, was granted. The Bombay Station was accordingly inaugurated on 23 July, 1927. Unexpectedly, after about three years, the Company went into liquidation on 1st March, 1930. It looked as though introduction of broadcasting had failed in India while the other countries were making good progress. In response, however, to popular demand, the Government decided to acquire the assets of the Indian Broadcasting Company and run the two Stations, at Bombay and Calcutta, on an experimental basis for a period of two years from 1 April, 1930. Finally, the Government decided in May, 1932 to continue the Indian State Broadcasting Service under their own management and placed it under the administrative control of the Department of Industries and Labour.

In March, 1935, a separate Department under a Controller of Broadcasting was constituted to work under the Department of Industries and Labour. In June, 1936, ‘All India Radio’ replaced the earlier nomenclature of the ‘Indian State Broadcasting Service’. Broadcasting was transferred to the Department of Communications in November, 1937 and was later transferred to the Department of Information & Broadcasting in October, 1941. This Department was reconstituted as the Department of Information and Arts from 23rd February, 1946. The name of the Department was again changed to the Department of Information & Broadcasting from 10th September, 1946.

The real break for broadcasting in India came with World War II. The War also made it necessary for the Government to expand the broadcasting organization so as to meet the requirements of its war effort. Most of the News Services and the External Services originated during the war years. When India became free, the AIR network had only six stations Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow and Tiruchi with a total complement of 18 transmitters, six of them on medium wave and the others on shortwave. Listening on medium wave was confined to the urban areas in these cities. With the integration of princely states, AIR took over five broadcasting centres functioning in these areas. The total number of radio sets at the time of independence in 1947 was a mere 2,75,000, but now-a-days Radio and TV are available almost in every house.
Radio is one of the strongest media channel in Silchar town. Radio has witnessed various ups and downs in its history and improvements with time to provide service to the people of the town. It is one of the media service provided free to the public of India by government of India. Radio is definitely the first electronic media to reach public in Assam as well as Silchar. The radio center (station) in Assam was started in Assam in the post independence period of India. It was started in Guwahati in 1948 with the efforts of first Chief Minister of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi. It was a radio station from All India Radio that started back in 1936 first in Mysore. The first Assamese radio news bulletin was broadcasted from AIR Guwahati only in 1957. Before that news bulletins were transmitted from Kolkata. Since then there were quite a many radio stations that were established in Assam in various towns and cities of Assam to reach every nook and corner of the state. Like any part of India, in Assam also the radio penetrated to every town and village. Akashbani or Akaxbani in Assamese is a household thing in Assam. The radio centers have given platform to various artists whether he may be a singer or actor for decades in Assam. One of the most popular singers till date in Assam, Jayanta Hazarika, started his career in AIR Guwahati. Similarly veteran film director, actor Munin Bhuyan started and got his platform via AIR Dibrugarh of which he was the director when he died. These just few of the hundred examples where Radio centers played an important role to discover real talents and producing them in front of the public.

The simplicity and variety in programs by All India Radio (AIR) could easily attract common public. Most of the radio stations in Assam have Assamese as the primary language. But they also transmit programs from All India radio Delhi (Akashvani) or Vividh Bharati which are of national level. Similarly many state level programs from AIR Guwahati are transmitted via all other local radio centers in Assam. The speciality of All India Radio which is now under Central Government’s Prasar Bharati, has been broadcasting diversified programs to the public. This is very much unlikely to the private radio channels which are mostly oriented around music. AIR stations used to broadcast programs from news and music to educational and comedy programs. Radio has become an essential part of the lifestyle for the people of Assam whether it is in town or in the village.

The radio was the first communication technology in Silchar town. Accepting Gadgil’s strategy of 1971, the Central Government established the third All India Radio (AIR) station of Assam in Silchar. The AIR, Silchar station was set up in 1973. The All India Radio, Silchar completed 38th year of broadcast on Aug 11. It was on August 11, 1971 that the station started broadcasting programmes. Since then, it has been rendering service for the people of the Barak Valley by imparting education, information and entertainment. It
broadcasts programmes basically in Bengali although different programmes are also broadcast in English, Hindi, Manipuri, Dimasa, etc. But there is no Frequency Modular (FM) Radio station in Silchar town. The simplicity and variety in programs by AIR, Silchar easily attract common public. It also transmits programs from All India radio Delhi (Akashvani) or Vividh Bharati which are supposed to be of National level. Similarly many state level programs from AIR Guwahati are transmitted via the AIR, Silchar station. The speciality of it which is now under central Government’s Prasar Bharati, has been broadcasting diversified programs to the public. This is very much unlikely to the private radio channels which are mostly oriented around music. AIR, Silchar station used to broadcasts programs from news, music to educational, comedy programs. Radio has become an essential part of the lifestyle for the people of Silchar whether it is in the town or in outside the town (http://www.cachar.gov.in). In Assam, the All India Radio, Silchar completes 38th year of broadcast on August 11, 2010. It was on August 11, 1972 that the station started broadcasting programmes. The Bangladesh crisis in 1971 and anti-India propaganda from across the border had prompted the government of India to set up a radio station at Silchar. The demand for introduction of Bishnupriya Manipuri language programmes and in AIR and DDKs of Silchar and Guwahati for broadcast as well as telecast through the electronic media was raised 1932. It was after series of agitations and discussions that the Government of Assam agreed to introduce the same which stood as a barrier to the information and broadcasting authorities to give effect to it. Since the Union Government is yet to introduce the Bishnupriya Manipuri programme in both the electronic media.

According to Prasar Bharati, Broadcasting Corporation of India, AIR, Silchar was inaugurated on 11 August, 1972 by the Honorable Supply Minister of Assam Sri Mahitosh Purkayastha. The primary language of the programme was Bengali besides programme in other languages, such as Manipuri, Dimasa. The coverage areas are: (i) Primary - 5540 sq. kms. (42 km. Redial), (ii) Secondary – 6940 sq. kms. (47 km. Redial) and (iii) Region covered are Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi district, partly the hilly region of North of North Cachar and bordering area of Manipur & Mizoram. The transmitter is located at Borakhai (behind N. I. T.), its power is 20 KW, the frequency is 828 KHz (362.32 M. Band) and the height of Antenna is 108 meter. The commissioning of Permanent Transmitter Building was done in February 1976. The commissioning of Permanent Studio Building was done in December, 1976. The commissioning of Regional News Unit was done on 1 February, 1978. The timing of regional news is (i) 07:35 a.m. to 07:40 a.m. and (ii) 19:55 p.m to 20:05 p.m. The normal transmission hour is (i) 1st transmission – 05:55 a.m. to 09:35 a.m., (ii) 2nd transmission
transmission – 12:00 noon to 15:00 p.m. and (iii) 3rd transmission – 17:00 p.m to 22:30 p.m. (AIR, Silchar). In Assam, the All India Radio, Silchar will complete 41st year of broadcast on August 11, 2013. It was on August 11, 1972 that the station started broadcasting programmes. AIR correspondent reports that the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 and anti-India propaganda from across the border has prompted the government of India to set up a radio station at Silchar.

(v) Television

The TV is regarded as one of the major medium of entertainment and instruction. The history of Indian Television dates back to the early 1980s with the only channel Doordarshan. Doordarshan - India (DDI) is a Public Service Broadcaster under Prasar Bharati. It provides television services in the country in terrestrial as well as satellite mode. The motto of Doordarshan is ‘Satyam Shivam Sundaram’ which translates as: ‘The Truth is The God and The God is Beautiful’. It signifies that Doordarshan stands for the Truth which, being another name of the God, is Good for the people also. The organizational structure shows that Doordarshan is headed by a Director General (DG), who is an ex-officio member of Prasar Bharati Board. Engineering activities in Doordarshan are supervised by Engineer-in-Chief (E-in-C), assisted by Additional Director Generals (ADGs). The present set-up depicts that Doordarshan is one of the largest broadcasting organizations in the world in terms of the infrastructure of studios and transmitters, the variety of software and the vastness of the viewer-ship.

The Television service in India was started by All India Radio in 1 November 1959 on experimental basis in its Research Department with a small transmitter and a make-shift studio. The regular daily transmission began in 1965. The service was extended to Bombay in 1972. By 1975, the TV services were available in seven cities. Television was separated from Radio on 1 April 1976. The name of new organization was given as ‘Doordarshan’. National Programme was introduced in 1982. At the time of 1982 Asian Games in Delhi, the black-&-white transmission was converted to the colour. In July 1984, Doordarshan started its ambitious scheme for the expansion of its coverage in the country by installing one-transmitter-a-day.

Television in Silchar has thousands of programmes in all the areas of the town. The small screen has produced numerous celebrities of their own kind some even attaining national fame. TV soaps are extremely popular with housewives as well as working women. Approximately two third of households in the town own a television. As of 2010, a total of 515 channels are available out of which 150 are pay channels. Assam has been witnessing the
growth of private satellite TV news channels on regular basis for the last few years. There are
television networks in the town. They are the Doordarshan Kendra, Silchar (DDK) and the
Barak Television Network (BTN). They are outlined here:

(a) Doordarshan Kendra, Silchar

Indian Regional DD Channels are those which are transmitted under the Doordarshan
network in various regions of the nation. The Regional service for the particular state are
communicated by all terrestrial transmitters in the state and additional programmes in the
local languages in prime time and non-prime time are available only through cable operators.
Programmes in regional languages are available in the respective states, terrestrially, round
the clock. DD North-East is a state owned TV channel telecasting from Doordarshan Kendra
in Guwahati, Agartala, Kohima, Imphal, Silchar, Dibrugarh, Tura, Aizawl, Itanagar and
Shillong. The mentioned places have individual Doordarshan studios as well. North Eastern
states of India broadcasting programmes are featured in languages like Assamese, English
and other languages and dialects of the North East region. The programmes include
entertainment programmes, informative programmes, social programmes, news and current
affairs, art and culture. DD North-East was launched on 15 August 1994 and it became 24
hours channel from 27 December 2000. The Channel as its commitment to the people of
Assam is successfully producing and telecasting Programmes in various formats and has been
appreciated by the viewers as they could derive benefits from it. The telecast of programme
on Flagship including magazine programme Bharat Nirman has been appreciated by different
sections of society. From programme production centre established in 1990, it became
regional in May 1993.

Doordarshan has given high priority for the development of TV services in the North East.
There are 132 transmitters in the North East. There are 12 programme production Centres of
Doordarshan in the North-East. Television studios have been established in the capital cities
of all the seven states of Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura Sikkim
and Arunachal Pradesh. There are additional TV centres at Tura in the Garo Hills of
Meghalaya and also at Dibrugarh and Silchar in Assam. All these TV centres originate
programmes for duration of 120 minutes on week days except DDK Guwahati. In addition,
all the transmitters in the North East relay a composite programme originated from Guwahati
which includes a news bulletin in English and a composite programme of interest to the
people of all the North Eastern states. Satellite uplinking facilities have also been established
in all the capital stations of the North East to facilitate feeding of news and other topical programmes to Guwahati and Delhi.

The Doordarshan Kendra, Silchar was inaugurated on 30.04.1993 and established in 1995 at Malugram. It telecasts different type of programmes like social, cultural, economic, educational, entertainment, environmental, historical, documentary etc. The regional transmission of DDK, Silchar starts at 5.30 p.m. during Monday to Friday. The language used in the programmes is mainly Bengali and Sylheti. Almost all the households of the town have access to programmes of the DDK, Silchar because it transmit regional channel in the National Channel (www.ddksilchar.co.in). Seventeen years of experience have added little expertise to Silchar station of Doordarshan network due to the permanent staff crunch and the lack of resources. A station with as many years of experience is usually expected to be competent enough to produce independent programmes. But it exists only as a relay station of Doordarshan’s New Delhi studio.

(b) Cable Television

Cable television is a system of providing television to consumers via radio frequency signals transmitted to televisions through digital light pulses through fixed optical fibers located on the subscriber’s property, much like the over-the-air method used in traditional television broadcasting i.e., via radio waves, where a television antenna is required. FM radio programming, high–speed Internet, telephony and similar non-television services may also be provided. There is also a private television network in the town; viz., the Barak Television Network (BTN) at Hospital Road. It was started in the year 1996. This television network has expanded its coverage up to the Barak valley. There are two operator links of the channel at N. S. Avenue and Tarapur. It is the cable operator of the town. Shyamananda Cable Television Network looks after the customer services of Rangirkhari locality. The viewers of cable television in the town are 51,793. The BTN has revolutionized the communication technologies in the town by introducing the satellite TV for imparting knowledge and entertainment (http://www.btn.co.in).

2. New Communication Technologies

(i) Internet

The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP) to serve billions of users worldwide. It is a network of networks that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business and government
networks of local to global scope that are linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies. Most traditional communications media including telephone, music, film and television are reshaped by the Internet giving birth to new services such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and IPTV. The Internet service was introduced in Silchar town in 1998.

The Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is the Internet Service Provider (ISPs) in Silchar town. BSNL provides Broadband, WLL and 3G Data Card for the Internet services. There are about 8,000 Internet connections in Silchar town. Public terminals, such as, cyber cafes were established in the core of the town which provide the access to and use of computer and the Internet to the people. There are 40 cyber cafes in the town. They provide Internet surfing, downloading, printing, typing, computer games, scanning and other computer related activities in Silchar town. The important cyber cafes are Web@Hut at Nazirpatty, Cyber dot com at Premtola, Cyber Inn at Premtola, Cyber Masscot at Shillongpatty (Office of the General Manager, BSNL, Silchar).

The Government of Assam has set up Common Service Centres (CSCs) in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode across the state under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in order to provide transparent, efficient and affordable Government to Citizen (G2C) services. The two private partners called Service Centre Agencies (SCAs) selected to implement the project are SREI Infrastructure Finance Ltd. and Zoom Developers (P) Ltd. In Cachar district, there are 84 CSCs. Some CSCs are located at Rangirkhari, N. S. Avenue, Meherpur and other places of the town. There are also private ISPs which provide Internet facility to the people of the town. They are Reliance, Tata Indicom, Idea, Airtel, Vodafone, etc. The list of cities where BSNL broadband service is available in Assam circle (as on 1.1.2007) are Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Silchar, Tinsukia, Dispur and Nagaon.

(ii) Mobile Phone Service

The mobile phone service in Silchar is provided by the following service providers:

(a) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)

BSNL was launched in Silchar in October, 2000. It is the first largest telecommunication company providing comprehensive range of telecom services in Silchar town. Services offered by basic telephony, Wireless Local Loop (WLL), Internet, Broadband, Intelligent Network, Leased Line and Data Network, MLLN and MPLS, ISDN and Cellular mobile (post-paid and pre-paid). It also provides Wireline, CDMA Mobile, GSM mobile, 3G
mobile, Smart Phone, landline telephone, carrier service, MPLS-VPN, VSAT, VoIP, etc. Within a span of ten years, it has become one of the largest public sector units in Silchar town. BSNL is the only service that has made focused efforts and planned initiatives to bridge the digital divide in the town. It has set up a world class multi-gigabit, multi-protocol convergent IP infrastructure that provides convergent services like voice, data and video through the same Backbone and Broadband Access Network. There are two District Telephone Exchanges of BSNL in the town. There are 2, 22,000 pre-paid and 38,000 post-paid users of BSNL in whole Silchar SSA. Of the customers, 2,500 are using data card. EVDO has been recently launched by BSNL in the town which has only 86 connections. But the third generation (3G) mobile service is yet to be launched within the town. In 2002, mobile Internet was used in the town. It also provides lease line circuits or core banking and ATM service within the town. The electronic banking service is totally dependent on it. BSNL Telemart near Cachar College also deals with these activities. In order to provide prompt telecom services to the customers of Silchar, BSNL has opened up this Telemart. The main purpose of the Telemart is to facilitate the public to get a new telephone connection without any inconvenience. With the opening of this Telemart, the telecom needs of customers of BSNL are going to be fulfilled more expeditiously. Over the past years, there is a spectacular development in the field of telecommunication in Barak Valley and N. C. Hills District. Besides providing basic telephone service on demand in almost all the town areas as well as in many rural and remote areas, several new services such as Internet telephony, Virtual Calling Cards, WLL telephones, Gramin Sanchar Sewak and WLL-mobile, etc. have been launched in the recent past. By introducing new technologies with rapid expansion of digital electronic exchanges and extensive installation of high quality optical fibre networks to even rural areas, BSNL has brought about an overall improvement in the way people communicate in urban as well as rural areas. Barak Valley has recently been connected to the rest of the world with optical fibre and the earlier microwave system also remains as the alternate system for media diversity and higher reliability (Office of the General Manager, BSNL, Silchar 2010).

Silchar Telecom District consists of four districts; namely, Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Dima Hasao (N. C. Hills). There are 100 exchanges in Sichar Secondary Switching Area (SSA) – 53 and 2 DLC exchanges in Cachar, 23 exchanges in Karimganj, 15 exchanges in Hailakandi and 7 exchanges in Dima Hasao.
(b) Airtel

Bharti Airtel Limited, usually referred as airtel, is an Indian telecommunications company. It operates a GSM network by providing a 2G or 3G services depending upon its operation. It is the second largest telecom operator in the town by subscriber base. It has about 75,000 subscribers in the town. It started its service in Silchar town in 2005. It provides mobile telephone service, wireless mobile Internet or GSM mobile service, post-paid mobile connections, Direct-to-Home Service (DTH), blackberry, etc. It also provides fixed line services and broadband services under the Airtel brand and is headed by Sunil Bharati Mittal. The four strategic business units are mobile, telemedia, enterprise and digital television. The Customer Service Centre of Airtel is located at Hospital Road. Airtel has expanded its services over the entire Silchar town. There are fourteen VTS or 3G tower of airtel (Airtel Customer Service Centre, 2010).

(c) Aircel

Aircel is a mobile phone service provider in Silchar town. It offers both prepaid and postpaid GSM cellular phone coverage throughout the town. In 2010, Aircel is present in all the municipal areas of the town. Aircel is undisputed market leader in the town since its launch. Additionally, Aircel has also obtained permission from Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to provide International Long Distance (ILD) and National Long Distance (NLD) telephony services. It also has the largest service in the state of Assam. Aircel is also one of the major mobile service units that covers a wide a range of customers in Silchar town. Aircel was introduced in Silchar town in 2004. The Aircel Store is situated at Premtola. It has expanded its throughout the jurisdiction of the Silchar Municipality (Aircel Customer Service Centre 2010).

(d) Reliance

Reliance mobile is one of the leading CDMA & GSM service providers in Silchar town. The Reliance Telecom started its mobile service in Silchar town in 2006. Since then, it has been serving a huge number of customers. The Reliance Mobile Stores in Silchar town are located at Shillongpatty and Rangirkhari, Sonai Road. The areas covered by Reliance are divided on the basis of the customer services provided to its subscribers. The Reliance Telecom service has expanded its activities into areas, such as Lakhipur Road, Ambicapatty, Jail Road, Shillongpatty, Central Road, Janiganj, Park Road, Club Road, Tarapur, Sadarghat, Subhashnagar, Chenkoorie Road, Dudpatil, Malugram, etc. There are about 45,000 thousand
customers in the town. The total number of subscribers varies from time to time. The Internet pack of GSM service provides 2G which provides Internet facility at 3 kms. speed and 3G which provides the same at 500 metres speed. The rate 2G service is low which is used by general students for study purpose whereas the rate of 3G is high which is generally used for official purpose. Reliance has eleven VTS or 3G tower (Reliance Customer Service Centre 2013).

(e) Vodafone

Vodafone Essar, usually referred as Vodafone, is a cellular operator in Silchar that covers 28 wards in Silchar. It was formerly known as Hutchison Essar. It is based in Mumbai. Vodafone Essar is the Indian subsidiary of Vodafone Group 67% and Essar Group 33%. It is the second largest mobile phone operator in terms of revenue behind Bharti Airtell and third largest in terms of customers. The company now has operations across the town with over 60,000 customers. Despite the official name being Vodafone Essar, its products are simply branded ‘Vodafone’. It offers both prepaid and postpaid cellular phone coverage throughout Silchar with good presence in the state. Vodafone Essar launched third-generation (3G) services in the town along with other region of the country in the January-March quarter of 2011 and plans to spend up to $500 million within two years on its 3G networks. Vodafone started to operate services in Silchar town in 2007. It has set up some Vodafone store, Mini Store and Self Service Kiosk in the town. The customer service centres are located at Shillongpatty, Hospital Road, N. S. Avenue and other places. Now-a-days, there are many customers within the town due to its various reasonable recharge potions including recharge cards and e-TopUp. Vodafone Mini Store is located at Circuit House Road, Silchar (Vodafone Customer Service Centre, Hospital Road).

(f) Idea

Idea was launched in Silchar town on 15 December, 2009. At present, it has completed one year. There are two customer service centres of Idea in Silchar town; viz., J. K. Communication at Dewanji Bazar and Sakshi Enterprise at Rangirkhari. The areas covered by Idea are divided on the basis of the two customer service centres located in the town. The J. K. Communication covers Ambicapatty, Jail Road, Chanmari, Shillongpatty, Central Road, Janiganj, Park Road, Club Road, Tarapur, Tarapur-Srikona, Tarapur Sibbari-Masimpur, Sadarghat-Udharbond, Madhuramukh-Khashipur and Dudpatil. J. K. Communication is located at Dewanji Bazar. On the other hand, Sakshi Enterprise covers areas such as
Premtola, Hospital Road, Bilpar, Kanakpur, Sonai Road-National Institute of Technology, Silchar. Near about twenty five thousand (25,000) mobile users/subscribers of Idea are in Silchar town. Almost 45% to 50% of the total population of the town is using mobile phone. Like Tata Indicom, Idea has also reached to a few customers. It provides prepaid connection, prepaid recharge, postpaid bill payments and customer service (Idea Customer Service Centre 2010).

(iii) Satellite Communications

A communications satellite (COMSAT) is an artificial satellite stationed in space for the purpose of telecommunications. It is applied in telephone, satellite television, mobile satellite technologies, satellite radio, amateur radio and satellite Internet. The growth of new communication technologies is quite significant in Silchar town.

With the establishment of the BTN in Silchar town, altogether 5398 numbers of satellite linkages have been made from the four Master Satellite linkers/ connectors available at Silchar up to August 1998. But there are only 1203 numbers of satellite linkages in the New Silchar (BTN Office, Silchar 2010).

In sum, Silchar town was only a small village of South Assam. Gradually, it started to grow as an urban centre and important commercial centre of the Barak Valley after the advent of the British in the town during the early part of the nineteenth century. Consequently, it has also witnessed a higher rate of population growth due to the migration and urbanization. With the passage of time, different type of development took place in the town. ICTs provide a better life style for the people of this town and provide good and useful teaching and learning environment for the educators of this town. To conclude, it can further be said that the newspapers and magazines emerged and grew in Silchar in the environment of the Indian freedom movement among the intellectuals. Local issues were raised to the forefront of the administration and the masses through the print media. They had an indigenous source of motivation because the intellectuals were mostly the Bengali and were inspired by the activities of the press in the mainland of Bengal surrounding present Kolkata and Dhaka. After the independence of India, the print media of Silchar was having the atmosphere of freedom and progress which imparted the spirit of nation-building.