INTRODUCTORY

1. Statement of Problem:

The world is currently witnessing a rapid increase in population and much faster increase in urban population due to influx of rural population to the urban. India is no exception of this process. The proportion of population living in urban areas has experienced a significant increase, especially during the past few decades. The urban population in India, which accounted for only 10.85% in 1901 increased to 17.30% in 1951, and 19.01% in 1971. This growth of urban population in India became much faster since 1981 when it accounted for 23.32%, besides about 27.78% in 2001. Against this background, in Assam 2.34% were living in towns in 1901, 8.81% in 1971, 9.87% in 1981, 11.10% in 1991 and 12.72% in 2001. It is expected that this trend will become more conspicuous in the coming years because of industrialization and migration from rural to urban area.

In this changing scenario, the rapid urbanization has brought in its wake a number of social and economic as well as civic problems. The frustrated and angry citizens, the urban planners, the architects, sociologists and the motley crowd, all concerned with the cities in one way or the other have given different epithets to the phenomenon called cities: ‘concrete jungle’, ‘urban nightmare’, ‘urban breakdown’, ‘urban blight’. Call it by any name; most of the cities and towns in India are teetering on the edge of an abyss with nobody being sure as how to defuse the ‘urban explosion’. To use the expression, ‘defusing the urban explosion’ might be an understatement, for many of the cities like Mumbai and New Delhi have already exploded and the harried citizens are coping with the ugly fallout. They can’t run away from the smoking ‘havens’ that give them the daily bread and a roof of sorts. Millions migrate to the metros, mega cities and
towns for a living and like moths they prefer to be scorched by the blazing fire. Cities and towns might mean total dehumanization and brutalisation and the majority of the urban poor and even the middle class might find themselves as "misfits"; all the same they know that they must accept the hard reality. The cities offer abundance of opportunities to those prepared to labour hard and the alternative is vegetative existence.

All the same, the inevitable question arises: can't we make our cities and towns livable? Can't we bridge the gap between the urban poor and urban rich? Can't we make provisions for the burgeoning population of poor in Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai and other cities? Are slums inevitable? Fifty-five years after Independence we have seen the march of our great cities and towns to steady decay, deterioration and inescapable disaster. It is as if all of us have been sucked into the quagmire and none can escape from it. The litany of scourges is too long: a runaway population, proliferation of slums, pollution of the air, contamination of water sources and rivers, mountains of putrefying solid wastes un-cleared by civic staff, intolerable noise pollution, poor mobility owing to a disorganized and inadequate mass transport system, a creaking road infrastructure unable to cope with the proliferation of four-wheelers, three wheelers and two-wheelers, pedestrians and cyclists mowed down by speeding vehicles, regular power breakdown making life miserable for households and small enterprises, broken sewers and overflowing sewage, officialdom that moves its fingers only when its palms are greased, mafia and crime syndicates in cities and towns in Bihar. Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai, drinking water scarcity in most of the cities, towns atrocities on women, hundreds upon thousands of street children roaming for victuals and leftovers, in order to make a living and support a poor home....

It is a never-ending list and both the planners and people seem to be resigned to the tired notion that they can do little to come out of the mess of their own making.
In this whole process, the small and medium towns in India have become the worst victims. As a consequence of this urban explosion causing unchecked speculation in land and growth of new slums, towns and cities are experiencing chaotic growth and large scale building activity on the peripheries. The unplanned location of industrial establishment in and around the cities also creates numerous problems. The inhuman conditions, arising out of the congestion and uncontrolled squatting, are further aggravated by the virtual absence of civic amenities. Even after more than fifty-five years of independence a good number of Indian towns have no municipal supply water and no proper sewer system. Not only our slums are filthiest in the world, our towns are most unclean; most frequently people use street walls as urinals and children defecate in the open gutter. Deficiency in playing grounds, parks and gardens, even streets and roads and bazars located near residential areas, our urban areas have been the breeding grounds of disease and social tensions. The existing machinery of municipal administration is unable to cope with these problems of rapid growth. The requirements of water supply, drainage, educational and recreational facilities, traffic and transport etc. all go up and the increasing congestion creates acute problems of transport and communication, public health, insanitation conservancy and above all pollution. The deterioration in the services and amenities is inevitable and the local authority have neither the necessary perspective nor the administrative machinery nor the resources to keep pace with rapid growth. Most city and town municipalities have little control over their affairs, because states place tight legal restrictions on their freedom to act particularly with respect to the types and amounts of the taxes that can be levied on their citizens. Further, municipalities have come to rely on state grants, which often come with orders that specify how the money is to be spent. Thus, municipalities are beset by a variety of problems ranging from graft corruption to wasteful duplication of services.

The study of Hailakandi, a small town, located in Barak Valley region of South Assam, is an excellent example of this problem. This small class IV town has recorded a rapid increase in its population (1462 in 1911; 29634 in 2001).
and deserves attention of all who are concerned with the well being of the town for its development and proper administration, hence, the importance of the study of this small town.

It is, therefore, desirable that India should evolve a new strategy of urban administration especially for growing small and medium towns of the country and formulate a set of plans and policies, aiming at a radical redirection of urban growth and thus create an urban environment congenial for human living. The passing of 74th Constitution Amendment Act 1992 may be regarded as an effective step towards this direction.

2. Objectives of the Study:

The Post-independence period gives special attention to the development of rural administration, which is needed to uplift rural population of our country, but it is observed that the Government of India is ignoring the minimum attention of urban administration, which is a clear sign of negligence to civilization. In this democratic era, a study of urban government is very important to safeguard our democracy, which is mainly based on civilization. At the time when the urban government in the country has been passing through a period of series of crisis – crisis of leadership, crisis of administration, crisis of finances and above all crisis of public confidence – any effort to study Urban Government & Town Development will help in highlighting the role, resurrecting the importance and identifying the problems of self-governing institution of the town dwellers.

The broad objectives of the present case study are as follows:

1. To study the physical and socio-economic features, the growth and development of civic administration and the civic problems of Hailakandi Town.

2. To examine the organizational set up, personnel pattern and the government control system over the Board.

3. To study the leadership pattern of the Municipal Board.
4. To assess the adequacy or otherwise of the civic services or
development services provided by the civic authority.

5. To study the financial position of the Board.

6. To study the fallout of women reservation policy as provided by 74th

7. To examine the planning pattern of the town and to make policy
suggestions for improved civic life of Hailakandi Town and its
development.

8. To offer certain suggestions for general reforms of the urban local
authority.

The Municipal Board of Hailakandi has been chosen for detailed micro-
level case study of urban government and administration. The town has recorded
a rapid growth of its population during the past decades. Consequent to the rapid
increase of population in a small town like Hailakandi brings a number of
problems for its administration and development and deserve attention of all who
are concerned with the well-being of the town and its inhabitants. Considering
this aspect, the present study highlights the problems of civic administration and
prospects for the development of Hailakandi town and its environs. The period
selected for study ranges from 1969 – 2000.

The old town of Hailakandi culturally enjoys a unique position in
Barak Valley Region of Assam. Here people of different faiths, beliefs, languages,
culture and traditions have mingled to form a heritage of its own almost from the
dawn of Epic Period. According to 2001 Census, Hailakandi town is a class IV
town in Assam. The area covered under the town jurisdiction is 6.44 sq.km.7 with
population of 29634 in 20018. The population per sq. km. is 6270 and there are
4280 occupied residential houses. There are only 2860 persons or 9.66% belong
to S/C and S/T within the town area of the total population 18778 are literate9,
and only 7369 persons or 28.92% are employed in different sectors of
economy10. There are 22 primary schools, 11 M.E. Schools, 6 High Schools, 3
Higher Secondary Schools, and 2 Colleges. The town has 2 hospitals. Hailakandi Municipal Board is one of the 24 Municipal Boards in Assam. The Board was established in 1963. Previously it was Town Committee. The Board is governed by the Assam Municipal Act, 1956. The Board has at present 10 elected representatives and 2 ex-officio members (1 M.L.A. and 1 M.P.). Of the elected members 4 are reserved for women including 1 Scheduled Caste. The first elected Municipal Board was constituted in 1969.

Though municipal government in a democratic form started functioning from 1969, it has not shown any steady progress. The factors which are responsible for the underdevelopment of entire Assam have also to some extent, contributed to the stagnant growth of municipal government and development of the town. Over and above, the unregulated interference of the political parties, which appeared in the local scene in the later part of the 1980's have equally shared the responsibility. There are, therefore, several factors, which have their own major and minor role in the unsatisfactory performance of the town government and development. The town is yet to get cosmopolitan character. However, religious groups-Hindus and Muslims exercise considerable influence over the politics of this town. The town is dominated both by the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party. Asom Gana Parishad has also large followers.

3. Review Of Literature:

Urban Government & Politics is concerned with different aspects of urban studies such as urbanization, urban development and planning, urban administration, reforms of urban Government etc. Many scholars have contributed a number of studies in the form of books, papers and reports as a wide spectrum of urban studies. Concerted efforts have been made by the scholars to study urbanization, urban problems and urban administration and related themes mentioned above in the past decades.

Urban governmental studies received a fillip with the publication of Max Weber's "The City" and Warren's "Municipal Administration" which provided
structural outline of urban Government I.M. Burlow in his "Metropolitan Government" discussed the evolution and development of structures of Government in London, Manchester, Toronto, Melbourne & San Francisco. Jacques Lagroye and Vincent write in their book "Local Government in Britain & France" highlight problems and prospects of urban govs in Britain & France. Pfiffner in his "Municipal Government", Mc Candless in "Urban Government & Politics", Mc Corkle in "Municipal Administration" discussed the theoretical aspects of urban authorities, Baker, Benjamin in "Urban Government & Politics" and Banfield, Edward C. in "Big City Politics" discussed organizational and functional pattern of urban govs. In his book "Municipal Administration in India - Some Reflections" S.K. Sharma and V.N. Chawla examined the aspects of urban local body like O & M Service, Productivity Service in Municipal administration, planning and development etc. The book, "Urbanisation and Macro-Social change" by Harshad R. Trivedi, attempts to review the theories of urbanization and macro social change and relate the one to the other with a view to formulate the concept of Semi-urban pockets, abbreviated as SUP. S.R. Maheswari in "Local Government in India" and R. Agarwal in "Municipal Government in India" explained the theoretical aspect of Urban Local Government. Th. Nabakumar Singh in his work "Urban Development and Planning" highlights the urban development and planning of Nambol Town of Manipur Valley on geographical basis only without explaining the role of urban Government in this regard. But urban Government plays a significant role in bringing about urban development and in formulation of urban planning. Rodney W. Jones in his book "Urban Politics in India", Tahseen in "Urban Politics and Administration" and M.P. Sharma in "Local Self-Government in India" also discuss the theoretical aspects of urban Government. Dr. Apurba Kr. Baiston in his book entitled Urban Local Administration (Growth and Development) discussed the growth and development of Urban local government of India with special reference of Bhubaneswar. In this book he has also highlighted the urban problems of the city of Bhubaneswar. A detail study of the office of the Municipal Chairman in Orissa has been done in this book. Dr. S.N. Mishra in his book
"Politics and Leadership in Municipal Government (A case study of Gaya Municipality)\textsuperscript{28} discussed the leadership pattern in Gaya Municipality and also explained the situational and municipal settings of Gaya town in Bihar. In his book "Urban Politics and Administration"(A case study of Allahabad)\textsuperscript{29} Dr. Ram Tahseen discussed the aspects of civic bureaucracy, civic functions and financial administration of Allahabad municipal authority. Dr. Arun Kr. Singh in his book "Urbanisation and Administration of Urban Infrastructure"\textsuperscript{30} has discussed the urban infrastructure facilities provided by the urban bodies of selected towns of Howrah, Burdwan, Hooghly-Chinsura and Chandernagar of West Bengal. Dr. Rajendra Kr. Awasthi in his book "Urban Development and Metro-Politics in India"\textsuperscript{31} explained in detail the different aspects of urban government of the city of Kamrup in Uttar Pradesh.

The publication of Dr. V.V. Rao's pioneer work "A hundred years of Local Self-Government in Assam" \textsuperscript{32} marks the beginning of the study of Local Government in Assam-both rural and urban. In his work Dr. Rao discussed the theoretical & practical aspects of local authority in Assam in historical perspective. Dr. Usha Rani Choudhury in her work "Municipal Government in India- with special reference to Assam"\textsuperscript{33} also discussed the growth and development of urban Government in Assam (1885-1950). Both the works were done on macro study basis. Debabrata Dutta in "Silchar Paurasabhar Itibritta"\textsuperscript{34} published on the occasion of Centenary Celebration of Silchar Municipal Board in the year 1993 as souvenir in which he briefly discussed hundred years history of Silchar Municipal Board and performance of the Board under different Chairman.

Dr. Deepali Barua in her book "Urban History of India" (A case study of Dibrugarh)\textsuperscript{35} has given a brief historical account of Dibrugarh Municipality in Assam. Dr. Manirul Huda in his book "Urbanisation in India"\textsuperscript{36} briefly discussed the functional aspects of Sibsagar Municipal Board. Dr. Ranjit Kumar Singha in his unpublished work "The Urban Linkage"\textsuperscript{37} discussed in detail the nature of link of the local politicians with the urban local bodies i.e. municipalities of Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Sibsagar.
A large number of papers and articles have been contributed by the Indian authors on various themes of urbanization, urban problems and urban government and administration in different journals and periodicals.

Thus, from the above review of literature, it is clear that many studies have been conducted in the last few decades on city and town government and planning to formulate policies at a radical direction of town administration and planning and creation of an environment, which suits human values. But no proper attempt has yet been undertaken to study the urban government and administration of individual small town on micro level basis in an undeveloped state like Assam. A work on this subject on micro-basis will enable us to enrich our idea of urbanization, urban problems, urban local government and administration, Urban Development and Planning in Assam.

4. Hypothesis:

The rapid urbanization has become a prominent feature all over the world and its phenomenon of metropolitisation and municipalisation has bought a number of civic problems. The urban administration is finding it difficult to tackle them. The citizens are the ultimate sufferers. This phenomena is also true in case of Hailakandi Town. The present study attempts to test the following hypothesis:

1. The town has faced acute civic problems.
2. There is mal-functioning of the existing organizational set up.
3. There is leadership crisis in the civic government.
4. The general feeling of the public is that local government is not competently able to discharge the duties assigned to it and there is inadequate civic services or development services provided by the Municipal Board.
5. Lack of financial resources of the civic body leads to its poor performance.
6. Women's awareness and leadership in civic body is far from satisfactory.
5. Sample Selection:

The Municipal Board of Hailakandi town in Assam has been selected for details study of urban self-government and town development, is according to purposive sampling, with intention to derive maximum information to test the hypothesis of the study as enumerated above.

The other reasons for selecting Hailakandi Municipal Board as sample are:

(i) In term of general physiographic and socio economic conditions, the civic center is the representative institution for Assam.

(ii) The Municipality has had sufficient exposure to administrative stress and strains.

(iii) The civic culture of this urban institution is not responsive to public opinion and measures of reforms.

6. Methodology:

The study is basically an empirical investigation into the knowledge of the concerned discipline. In order to arrive at a conclusion regarding problems, achievements and prospects of Urban Government and town development in Assam with special reference to Hailakandi Municipal Board from 1969 – 2000, the empirical research methods have been followed. To analyse the past achievements of urban self-government in the state of Assam in general and Hailakandi town in particular, historical references have also been highlighted.

6. (a) Field Study Techniques And Sources of Data:

The important guiding factors in choosing the appropriate methods to collect data and to analyse them depends upon the problems at hand. The nature of the work necessitated collection of both Primary and Secondary data.

6. (b) Primary Data:

For quantitative data collection a survey was undertaken to interview of the town dwellers of different levels of society. The interview was personally
conducted by the author. The data collected from this source were supplemented by other sources. To interview the town dwellers, the respondents have been selected with the help of stratified random sample from the voters list used for the Municipal election. The sample contains 100 respondents. Besides, all the Commissioners, Chairman, five Ex-chairmen and all personnel of the Municipal Board were interviewed. The Primary Data forming the basis of the study were collected with the help of interview schedules. For qualitative study in depth conversation with Chairman, Ex-chairman, Vice-chairman, Engineer, leaders of Employees Union of the Municipal Board, Educationists, Political leaders were undertaken.

6. (c) Secondary Data:

There are ample sources of Secondary data available to gather information of urban self-government and town development of Assam in general and Hailakandi town in particular. The secondary materials have been collected from the Assam Municipal Act, the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, municipal official records, files, census reports, news items published in both national and local dailies, local government journals, published and unpublished works on urban self-government, urban development and planning, printed books on Indian government and administrations, reports, circulars government publications etc.

6. (d) Participant And Non-Participant Observation:

Because of previous contact and long stay in the municipal area, there is substantial opportunity to observe the various facts of municipal administration. By sitting in municipal office, chamber of Chairman, paying informal visits to individual commissioner of the Municipal Board, conducting tours in wards, attending the meetings of the Municipal Board, much information was gathered.

6. (e) Informal Discussion:

Apart from the interview schedule and observation techniques much information was gathered through informal conversations. By staying municipal head quarters and developing friendly relations with the Commissioners and the
employees of the municipality, there was sufficient opportunity to have frank informal conversations with the people concerned, individually or in-group. This technique was very helpful in understanding the relationship pattern within the municipal framework, political dynamics within the area and some 'inner' stories, not usually told during formal interview.

7. General Comments:

To understand the municipal administrative processes, it was thought proper to use a combination of several field study techniques instead of relying on a single technique. It is difficult to get real insight into the problem by administering well-prepared questionnaire alone, it is feared that usually frank answers are not given, particularly by government officials and municipal leaders, in formal interview. So, due emphasis was laid on observation, case histories and informal discussions. By staying in the municipal area for a longer period a close association was developed with the people concerned and more information were gathered through informal channels.

8. Field Work Procedure:

For establishing good rapport and administering the interview schedule three months were spent. In the beginning, for about 15 days, data about the municipal situation were collected, purpose of the study was explained to the persons concerned and informal contacts were established with them.

Interview was started after 15 days. To avoid the 'official' touch, the time and place of interview were privately arranged and to disarm the people personal matters were also discussed. The places of interviews were the municipality office or the residence of the one interviewed. Only a few interviewees, who were not easily available, were formally called for interviews. Though many of them were conscious and spoke in guarded words, most of them were free and frank in expressing their opinion. Only a few showed reluctance, when their replies were noted at the time of interview. But most of them did not mind it. The interviewing took more than two months.
8. (a) Observations:

Side by side with the process of interview, the techniques of observation and informal conversation were followed. The municipal office was very often visited, meetings were attended and tours were made in the wards. Informal discussions were made at the residence of the author or that of the interviewees, at the time of morning and evening walks or while on talks.

Though the interview and the collection of basic materials were completed within three months, another one month was spent in the field, making observations, resolving some doubts and collecting more information informally.

8. (b) Difficulties:

Besides limited financial and staff assistance, many other difficulties were felt during the fieldwork – First, it was difficult to get hold of the officials of the Municipal Board and formal and informal leaders of the town. Secondly, much time was devoted in establishing rapport because it was difficult to get correct information and their frank opinion without winning their confidence through informal contacts. Thirdly, there was a tendency among some of the officials of the Board to hide facts and to treat some files confidential enough to put before some outsiders. But these difficulties were overcome by developing friendly relationship with the officials of the Board. Fourthly, for sometimes, the over-engagement of Chairman, Engineer, Accountant as well as other persons connected with municipal administration put a great obstacle to the fieldwork. These limitations did not hinder the author in collecting the necessary data. However, a longer time was taken than anticipated.

9. Scope of the Study:

aspects of Urban Self-Government and Town development of this medium size town for the last 32 years (the first elected Municipal Board of Hailakandi in 1969) has been undertaken.

10. Organisation:

The entire study has been organized into 10 (ten) Chapters.

**Chapter-1: The Conceptual Framework** deals with the various concepts regarding the Urban Local Self-Government like types of Urban Self-Government, urban area, urbanization – its trends in India, Assam and also in Hailakandi, urban development etc.

**Chapter-2: Urban Government in Retrospect** deals with a brief account of the growth and development of Urban Self-Government in Assam in general and Hailakandi in particular, a brief profile of Hailakandi Town, situational setting or physical situation of Hailakandi Town i.e., its location, boundary, climate and rainfall, environment, river, communication and literacy, religion, economic and political conditions of the people of Hailakandi town and civic politics of Hailakandi Municipal Board during the years 1969 – 2000 i.e. the period under study. This chapter also highlights the major civic problems of Hailakandi Town.

**Chapter-3: Organizational Administration** deals with the organizational structure of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi i.e., the Municipal setting – its composition, reservation of seats (S.C., S.T and Women), nominated elements, ex-officio members in the Board, different departments of the Board, Committees of the Board, working of the Board, meeting of the Board and the role of Commissioners, minutes of proceedings.

**Chapter-4: Leadership in Urban Self-Government** (Chairman and Commissioners) deals with leadership pattern of Municipal Board of Hailakandi i.e. socio-economic and political background and other aspects of the Municipal Commissioners. The study includes the office of Chairman of the Municipal Board i.e. the process of election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the term of Chairman and Vice Chairman. This chapter also deals with the relationship of
Chairman with (a) Municipal Commissioners, (b) Municipal Employees, (c) State Government. The chapter also highlights the role of Chairman in Urban development.

Chapter-5: Personnel System in Urban Self-Government deals with the socio-economic background of the Municipal employees, system of recruitment, promotion, retirement, employees' union and their grievances, provincialisation of service and administrative culture of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi.

Chapter-6: Development Services (i.e. Public Utility Services) deals with the important civic services done by the Municipal Board of Hailakandi for the general welfare of the town residents and town development. This chapter, in short, deals with the functional aspects of the civic body. The development services or welfare services include supply of drinking water, land use control and planning, drainage and conservancy work, public health and sanitation, construction and development of town roads, footpaths etc, street lighting, slum improvement and up-gradation including National Slum Development Programme (NSDP), Urban Poverty Alleviation, parks garden, open space and play grounds, crematoria and burial grounds, and so on. The data collected by the survey of 100 households on the public attitude to the performance of Municipal Board has been analysed in this chapter.

Chapter-7: Financial Administration deals with Income and Expenditure Pattern i.e., various heads of income and expenditure of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi during the reference period. The chapter also highlights the financial crisis faced by the Board and the suggestions for improving the financial condition of the Board.

Chapter-8: Inter-governmental Relations (State Control and Supervision) deals with different aspects of control and supervision of state government over Municipal Board of Hailakandi.

Chapter-9: Awareness Level of Women Contestants in Urban Local Body's Election deals with the levels of awareness of women contestants in last municipal election as a fallout of women's reservation of seats in Urban Local
Body provided by the 74th Constitution Amendment Act. The awareness regarding (a) Candidature and election symbol, (b) Opponents in elections, (c) Wards and Voters, (d) Limits of Expenditure, (e) Reservation of Seats etc.

Chapter-10 : Perspective Urban Planning and Development deals with the planning proposals for Hailakandi Town for its all-round civic development. The chapter also includes the municipal reforms agenda.

The work also includes a conclusive Chapter which includes conclusions of all the Chapters and Recommendations for general reforms or package for re-building Urban Local Bodies.

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