Introduction:

The present system of urban self-government or municipal administration in Assam is the creation of the British. Prior to 1826, when Assam was annexed by the British, there were no municipal boards. During the period 1926 to 1936 no attempt was made to establish municipal boards for the management of municipal affairs for obvious reasons. The East India Company was primarily concerned with the consolidation of its powers in Assam. Much of its attention was devoted to the suppression of the lawless activities of the wild tribes. Therefore, no writer of eminence refers to this subject. Hamilton in his "An Account of Assam", Robinson in his "A Descriptive Account of Assam", Wade in his "An Account of Assam" do not refer to it. Edward Gait in his "History of Assam" disposed of this subject in 13 lines. Matters relating to local government including in minor cases, education, health and sanitation were taken up by the Panchayats. According to Robinson there were two to three Panchayats in each sub-division consisting of Assamese gentleman concerning themselves with the disposal of civil and criminal cases of minor importance. S.K. Bhujan says that David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam, had instituted the Panchayats in the populous Parganas and villages.
2.1. Growth & Development:

Urban self-government or Municipal Administration was thought of only when the insanitary condition of the town of Gauhati was shockingly bad and as a consequence the mortality rate among the troops stationed in the cantonment area was great, the district officers, particularly the District Magistrate and the Civil Surgeon joined together and constituted a Town Improvement Committee. Thus, the formation of the Town Improvement Committee in Gauhati was not the result of any direction from above. It was brought into being by the local people and by local circumstances, and therefore, it was a genuine type of local self-government institution. But it is not definite when the Town Improvement Committee was established in Gauhati. However, it existed in 1836. But it can not be said that the Town Improvement Committee at Gauhati was a voluntary association as is generally contented. As a matter of fact, it was brought into existence by the control of the provincial government like other local authorities. In course of time Town Improvement Committees were set-up in all important towns of Assam like, Nowgong, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Tezpur and Dibrugarh. But no Town Improvement Committee was setup in Hailakandi.

Assam became a Chief commissioner's province in 1874 and before that there were only one Municipality in Assam i.e., in Gauhati under the District Town Improvement Act 1864. Although no definite date is known about the formation of the Gauhati Municipality, yet from the Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India, it can be learnt that by 1878 Gauhati became a first class Municipality under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1876 which opted for three types of municipalisation in the urban areas of Assam – first class, second class and third class. The Act was introduced by the government of Assam in 1878. Four classes of municipal bodies were established in Assam. These were ; First class municipalities, second Class municipalities, unions and stations. In 1806 Hailakandi was constituted into a Union.
In 1923, the Assam Municipal Act was passed to democratize the urban self-government to a great extent. This Act formulated broad principles. The Municipal Boards were democratically organized. All the stations and unions that existed in Assam were abolished. Franchise were given to all. Hailakandi union was abolished and a Town Committee was established sometimes between 1924-1926. It was upgraded to Municipal Board in 1963 under the Assam Municipal Act 1956 which is still in operation in Assam with subsequent amendments.

In closing the brief survey of the evolution, growth and development of urban self-government in Assam it may be pointed out that there was only one municipal board (Gauhati) one township (Sylhet) and one Chowkidari union (Silchar) in Assam upto 1874 when Assam was constituted a Chief Commissioner’s province. But since 1874 there appears to be rapid progress in the direction of urban Self-Government in Assam. At present there are 65 urban local bodies in Assam, of them there are 26 Municipal Boards, 39 Town Committees and 1 Municipal Corporation, i.e. Guwahati Municipal corporation. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation is administered by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act 1969 and all Municipal Boards and Town comities are administered by the Assam Municipal Act, 1956.

2.2. Formation of Urban areas:

There are various grounds — administrative, military, commercial and industrial which facilitate urbanization. According to Stanley K. Shultz, Professor of Wisconsin University of the United States, the urban areas can be classified fundamentally into the following types—(1) Administrative center ; (2) Religious center ; (3) Market center ; (4) Cultural center. Any particular center may fulfill any one of this function or any combination thereof. The town of Hailakandi, however, grew as an administrative center. It was not a center of pilgrimage, nor it had any distinguishing cultural importance. Its cultural growth was only an outcome of its administrative development.

Hailakandi was one of the oldest Sub-Divisions of Assam which was constituted as civil Sub-Division on 1st June 1869. Since then it has been sub-
divisional Head Quarter. Till 30th September 1989, it was a civil Sub-division of Cachar District and on 1st October 1989 it emerged as Civil District with the same name and same territorial jurisdiction of the earlier Sub-Division by the Government of Assam. Now Hailakandi Town is the District Head Quarters.

The British planters came to Hailakandi for its tea garden. There are 17 tea gardens in Hailakandi which produce quality tea. Bamboo, the major raw material of Hindusthan Paper Corporation at Panchgram are sufficiently available in the district. The only Railway link of Mizoram with rest of the Country by Badarpur—Bhairabi (Mizoram) Railway passes through Hailakandi town. The 154 National Highway which touches Mizoram and which is the shortcut from Guwahati to Aizal also passes through Hailakandi town. All these greatly enhanced the importance of Hailakandi as a center of Commercial and administrative activities.

2.3. Hailakandi - Etymology:

The name of Hailakandi was during the Kachari reign which was annexed to the Kachari Kingdom in 1736 A.D. For the nomenclature of Hailakandi different myth goes on and here these are briefly narrated:

(a) In Brahmaputra valley 'bund' constructed for the protection of people as well as land is known as 'Ali'. In Barak valley it is pronounced as 'Ail'. From the word Ail it deviates to 'Hai'. In Boro – Kachari languages 'Kandi' means temporary paddy land. So, it is named as Hailkandi and then to Hailakandi.

(b) Sali Paddy is grown in this district as principal crop abundantly and from Sail-Kandi it is named as Hailakandi.

(c) The third belief goes like that the western portion of the Boroibari and Ipara Queen Hail was the Zamindar of the estate and from her name it became Hailrkandi and then to Hailakandi.

(d) In long past the Kuki people were living in Cachar District in different groups. The Hailakandi region was inhabited by Kuki people and was named as Halam. In Kuki language Hala means God and Kundi means Almighty Siva. So,
Hailakandi means the country of Gods and it transformed to Halpakundi at the time of Kachari Kingdom and finally it becomes Hailakandi at the time of British rule.

Hailakandi was a part of Cachar District till 1st October, 1989. The Hailakandi Sub-division was created in 1869. At present it is the district Headquarters of Hailakandi district.

2.3.1. History:

Situated in a picturesque natural background with evergreen hills and forests all around, Hailakandi culturally enjoys a unique position in Barak Valley region of South Assam. Here people of different faiths, beliefs, languages and traditions have mingled to form a heritage of its own almost from the dawn of the Epic Period.

The early history of Hailakandi is wrapped in legends and popular hearsays. Neither the Ahom Buranjis nor the Kachari Buranjis throws any light upon Hailakandi till the beginning of the 7th Century A.D. During the Epic Period, we find mention to one 'Hidmba Rajya' which is identified as 'Cachar Kingdom' by the modern scholars. This 'Hidmba Rajya' of the Epic Period was most probably, a tribal state (Kuki state). According to modern scholars, Hailakandi was then included in the "Hidmba Raja" of the Kukies.

The theory that Hailakandi was originally a part of the Kuki Kingdom, i.e, "Hidmba Rajya" may be explained by a linguistic derivation of the name itself. In Kuki Dialect "Hala" means "Isvara" and "kundi" means "Param Purush Shiva" or "Narayana". So, "Hailakandi" means the Kingdom of lord Shiva or Narayana. Here, it is very important to note that the Kukis (who are referred as Kiratas / Mlechhas in the epics), were originally Shiva worshipers.

An authentic history of Hailakandi, however, begins from the 7th century A.D. From the Burunijis it is learnt that during the 7th Century, the Jatinga Valley and Hailakandi region together formed a separate kingdom known as Joytunga Varsha. But from the Copper-plates of Raja Loknath and Mohendra Nath, found
at village Kalapur under Sri Mangal Police Station of Sylhet district (now in Bangladesh), it is known that beside the Joytunga varsha there was another small state in this area known as “Shiva Kshetra”. This Shiva Kshetra included some places of Hailakandi, viz, Veruarpur pargana, Lalabazar, Vishnupur etc.

From the last-part of the 7th Century till 1487 A.D. the History of Hailakandi once again shrouded by legends and local myths.

A few years ago some bricks, bearing the name of ‘Srimat Harish Chandra Maharaj’ dt. 1409 Sakavda (1487 A.D) were found on excavation of the marshy land of the Sakala Dighi (a tank near Krishnapur Bazar). Some coins of Raja Haris Chandra were also collected by a resident of Abdullapur from the same place in 1964.

During the Ahom Mughal contest in 1739, Aga Mohammed (Mughal Commander) came to Cachar from Sylhet and set up a new administration over the area. Most-probably Hailakandi was also brought under the new Mughal administration and as a result there began a change in the population pattern of the area. Cachar was annexed to the British empire on 14th August, 1832. As Hailakandi was then a part of Cachar, it also came under the rule of the Company Raj.

In 1857 when the great revolt of the Sepoys popularly known as Sepoy Mutiny broke out, three companies of 34th Sepoys of Chittagong plundered the Government Treasury and managed to come to the south-east of Sylhet with the aim of going to Manipur. As soon as Mr. Allen heard the incident he deputed major Byng with 8th Gorkha Rifles for nabbing the rebels. At Latu (near Karimganj town) a fierce battle took place between the Gorkhas and the rebel Sepoys. Major Byng and 26 Sepoys then tried to move to Manipur through Hailakandi and subsequently they took shelter in a village called West Chandpur, Sorespur T.E. In receipt of their news, Lt. Ross stationed a section of the Gorkha Rifles at a place near Chandpur. The Sepoys avoided direct confrontation with the Gorkha Rifles and move to the forests of Mohanpur on the eastern bank of river Katakhal. Here a pitched battle was fought between the Company soldiers and the
Mutinous Sepoys. This place is now called “Rana Tillah”. The few Sepoys who survived managed their escape to Manipur through the forests of Binnakandi. A good number of Sepoys arrested by the Company soldiers were publicly hanged to death at Mohanpur Bazar near Hailakandi. In the contest of this incident the British authority planned to create a sub division in Hailakandi for their administrative convenience. On June 1st, 1869, Hailakandi was declared a subdivision with district headquarters at Silchar.

Hailakandi, however, did not come into contact with any political movement till the beginning of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905. On 16th October 1905, like the people of Karimganj and Silchar, the people of Hailakandi also performed “Rakhi Bandhan”, “Arandhan” and man meetings etc. in protest against the “settled fact” of the partition of Bengal. On April, 24, 1938 Netaji visited Hailakandi which inspired the people of Hailakandi to join the freedom struggle.

During the Second World War (1938—1945), there were two cannons— one at Lakshmisahar (erstwhile companyganj) and another at Monachara. There was a radar in Companyganj to observe the movement of foreign aircrafts. There was also an aerodrome in Companyganj area near Basic Training Centre. There were cannons of Negro soldiers, English soldiers and American soldiers. The atrocities of the white soldiers remained unrestricted during the Second World War.

From various sources, it is gathered that though there were some revolutionary activities in Sylhet and Silchar during the Quit India Movement in 1942, still in Hailakandi no such activity was traced by the Government. However, according to local sources, Hailakandi was then a safe shelter for the revolutionaries. But it was from here Late Upendra Kumar Dhar could maintain link with revolutionaries of Bengal for carrying the programmes of the 1942 movement, particularly underground activities. Dr. Manmath Choudhury from Hailakandi joined the INA and earned the distinction of participation in the war of liberation under Netaji. Against the Cabinet Mission decision to put Assam in
Group C (Bengal and Assam), the people of Hailakandi also raised their voice of protest. Finally, at midnight August, 14-15, 1947, Hailakandi also shared the joys of freedom and sorrows of the partition of the country.

2.4. Situational Setting (Physical Situation)

2.4.1. Location:

The town of Hailakandi is located in $24^\circ 46' \text{N}$ North Latitude and $92^\circ 32' \text{E}$ East Longitude and 81.3 m above mean sea level. It is situated on either banks of river Dhaleswari at a distance of 336 km. towards South from Dispur, the Capital of Assam.

2.4.2. Area:

According to the records of municipality in 1968, Hailakandi covered an area of 4.55 Sq kms. The municipal records show the expansion of the town from 4.63 sq kms in 1968 to 6.44 sq. kms. in 2001. As per government norms 5.40 sq. kms. of total area is regarded as slum area with 11 slum pockets. During the last decades the area of the town has increased due to the expansion of trade, education, communication, search of employment, rural-urban migration, influx from Bangladesh etc.

2.4.3. Boundary:

The town of Hailakandi has natural boundaries. It is encompassed by three hills – Kalacherra hills, Jafirband hills and Serispore hills on three sides. The two rivers Katakhal and Dhaleswari have fallen in to the river Barak after passing through Hailakandi. The Municipal area is bounded on the north by a canal known as Basair Khal, on the south by the village Bhichincha, on the east by the village Rangauti-I and Rangauti-II and on the west by the river Dhaleswari which serves as town protection drain and Kanchanpur village.

The town Hailakandi is more than one hundred years old. The town has narrow streets and alleys. Many of the houses are very old. The most valuable contribution for development of Hailakandi town was made by Harbert Saheb. Hailakandi Bazar still bears his memories and goes by the name "Herbertganj
The land measuring 20 bighas, 1 khata and 11 chataks was acquired from the government for the Herbertganj Bazar in 1893-94. The Bazar remain the main source of income of Hailakandi Municipal Board till today. Herbart Saheb planted trees in some of important spots of the town which grew into large one. The large trees near Graham M.V School, Dak Banglow, Police station, D.C.,s Banglow near Government V.M.H.S.School and near Herbertganj Bazar still bears his memories and play a significant role in protecting envoirment of the town.

The middle part of the town is the center of trade and business and contains the offices of administration. The D.C. Establishment, public offices, judicial, revenue, magisterial courts, police station, S.P. office, District Jail, Municipal Boards, Zilla Parishad office, Banks, District Library, newly established Educational Complex, Government V.M.H.S.School, I.K.Girls'H.S.School etc. are situated in this area of the town. The cultural institutes like Rabindra Bhabhan, Rabindra granthagar, Town Hall, Barak Upatyaka Bangla Sahitya O Sanskriti Sammelan are also situated in this area. The only open public place of the town is DSA field or Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose Stadium is also situated in this area. Byond this there is Rabindra Bhabhan, Rabindra Sarovar and Circuit House. The three-hundred years old famous Adi Kali Temple is situated in the heart of the town. To the Eastern part of the town BSNL Complex, Public H.S. School, P.H.E. complex are situated. The railway area is an important part of this area that has grown around the railway station. To the extreme West 100-baded Civil Hospital is situated. To the North area i.e, the pash area of the town, R.K. Mission, S.S.College (biggest college in the district), Model Township & College colony (the biggest slum pocket of the town) are situated . The municipal area extends upto Satsanga Ashram. To the extreme West Basic Training Centre, Fire Service Station & S.P. Banglow are situated. The suburb of the town i.e, Lakshmisahar is situated in this area. It is included in the town for the purpose of municipal administration. This area has come under the spell of haphazard development due to the cheaper land value. The Block Development office, and two High schools are situated in this area of the town.
Physical Characteristics:

2.4.4. Topography:

In the town of Hailakandi most of the area is plain. The river Dhaleswari is crossing through the town while flowing from North to South. The area near the river is comparatively low and falls under flood prone belt during monsoons. The surrounding area of the town is agricultural field where rice growing as cash crop.

2.4.5. Temperature:

The mean daily temperature of Hailakandi town falls between 9.5°C to 35.5°C. January is considered to be the coldest month and June is considered to be the hottest month of the season for Hailakandi town.

2.4.6. Humidity:

In the town of Hailakandi there is highly humid nearly all the year round. During February and March the air is comparatively less humid, the afternoon humidity being around 60% the maximum relative humidity is 85.5% and minimum relative humidity is 52% as per records available.

2.4.7. Wind:

It is found that the wind in the town of Hailakandi is generally light throughout the year. Sometimes the wind is associated with thunderstorm in summer, when a strong wind blows for small spells. The direction of wind in the town is generally variable. However in the afternoon, during the monsoons, the wind from South West or West is most common. In the early hours of the day wind blowing from North East and South East are more common.

2.4.8. Special Weather Phenomena:

Some of the storms and depressions in May and post monsoon season approach the town and its neighbouring areas causing widespread heavy rain. Thunder storms are frequent in the summer season. Occasionally these are accompanied by hail and squalls. Foggy weather is normal in the period of November to February.
2.4.9. Environment

The town is not having any kind of large-scale industries except some of the small and cottage level industries; which may pollute the atmosphere of the town with their solid, liquid and gas waste. But the town is exposed to smoke, dust and noise nuisance along the NH 154 with the movement of heavy traffic, which runs through the heart of the town. A number of rice and saw mills and brick industries, located in and around the town, also contribute their share of pollutant and smoke. It is difficult to quantify the degree of pollutants in the air due to lack of a detailed scientific study. The wind velocity and wind direction in the town is generally governed by the general airflow of the region.

2.4.10. River:

The main river Dhaleswari passes through the town of Hailakandi where it attains a breadth of over 35m. It originates in the Mizo-hills where it is known as Thong. Originally, it is used to flow along the western side of the District and fall into the river Barak near Panchgram. A former king is said to have diverted its course a little above Rongpur and the old channel is now dried up for a considerable distance of about 1.5 km. After the commencement of the new channel which is called "Katakhal" and the lower reaches of Dhaleswari is completely cut off from the river that originates from the Mizo-Hills. As a result through the year it is nearly dry and dwindles to an insignificant stream. The river Katakhal flows along the East of the valley and falls into the river Barak near Katakhal Railway Junction.

2.4.11. Communication:

The problem of urban communication involves two major factors - regional and local. Regional communications are the towns links with the outside world whereas the local communications have an inward focus directed to the convenience of habitation. Considered from the regional point of view, the location of Hailakandi town is not so unsatisfactory. Its location at Lumding-Badarpur section of N.F.Railway and recent connection with Mizoram makes it,
on the whole, well situated on the rail system. The railways have linked to the rest of the country.

Road transport carrying passengers is one of the important means of communication of Hailakandi town. A Rajya Transport Depot i.e., Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) was established in 1958. Hailakandi town is deprived of easy access of air service. The Kumbhirgram Airport near Silchar is about 70 k.ms. from Hailakandi. Moreover, there is neither a booking counter of Indian Airlines nor any agent of IA, which is urgent, need of Hailakandians.

In the field of regional road communication the picture is rather depressing. However, during 1990s introduction of Mini Bus, Delux Bus and Night Bus services has solved this problem to a considerable extent. The roads of the town are not very wide leading to congestion of traffic flow. As a matter of fact with the exception of N H 154 and a few other roads, the remaining roads constituting the bulk vary between 10 to 15 feet in their widths. Even these widths are not uniformly available due to encroachments. But recently, under town beautification plan these encroachments were removed to some extent. The inadequacy of the road widths is pronounced in the entire town. The inevitable by-products of such a situation have been a number of recorded accidents, slow and time-wasting movement and almost an impossible task faced by the traffic authorities.

The Public Works Department of State Government maintains the roads of the town and Municipal Board. There is no Town Improvement Trust or Town Development Authority in Hailakandi like Silchar or other towns. The Municipal Board maintains 10.03 km of metal roads, 1.50 km of concrete roads, 20.22 km of gravel roads and 20 km of kacha roads—a total of 51.75 km roads. The development of roads is an urgent need of the town.

2.5. Social Conditions (Demographic Profile)

2.5.1. Population:
The population of Hailakandi for a long period, after the beginning of its current era of development in the early 19th Century A.D. is largely a matter of conjecture. The first systematic attempt at an enumeration of the whole province of Assam was taken in 1872 when Assam was a part of Bengal. Hailakandi at that time was little more than a village. The Census Reports of India gives an idea of the increase in its population from 1462 in 1911 to 29,634 in 2001. Apart from normal population a large number of employees, small businessmen, day labourers and other people come in this town every day. The growth of population of Hailakandi as recorded in the last decades can be seen in Table- 2.1

**TABLE- 2.1**

Growth of town Population (1911—2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Male Population</th>
<th>Decadal Variation</th>
<th>Female Population</th>
<th>Decadal Variation</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Decadal Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1462</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1462</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1462</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2228</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3084</td>
<td>1082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>4590</td>
<td>2706</td>
<td>3629</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>8219</td>
<td>5135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7646</td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>6486</td>
<td>2857</td>
<td>14132</td>
<td>5913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>8772</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>7872</td>
<td>1386</td>
<td>16644</td>
<td>2512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>13131</td>
<td>4359</td>
<td>12348</td>
<td>4476</td>
<td>25479</td>
<td>8835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>15634</td>
<td>2503</td>
<td>14544</td>
<td>2196</td>
<td>29634</td>
<td>4155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India.

From Table-2.1 it appears that the trend has been towards an increase in population constantly since 1911 except 1931. There is remarkable increase of population in 1951. It is due to the partition of India and flow of influx from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The massive-scale migration from mostly rural to urban as a consequence of "pull" and "push" factors and the fundamental right of the people to settle in any part of the country and "population explosion" led to the increase of town population. The antecedents like flood, draught, structural
and non-structural violence, communal tension continue to be push factors that compel the downtrodden mass of peasants and peace loving people to migrate to the town.

The population of Hailakandi town as per the 2001 census is 29,634 persons as compared to a population of 10,345 persons of Lala, which is the only other urban area of Hailakandi district besides Hailakandi town. The population of Hailakandi town is 74.12% of the total urban population of the district thereby establishing its position as the prime urban area of the district.

**Distribution of Urban Population in Hailakandi District 2001**

**Distribution of Urban Population in Hailakandi District**

- **25.88** Lala
- **74.12** Hailakandi

*Fig. No. 2.1*

*Source: Census of India.*

The population of Hailakandi town for the year 1901 is not available. In the year 1911 it had a population of 1,462 persons. During the period of forty years till 1951, it rose to 8,219 persons showing an increasing of 6,757 persons. However we find that the increase during 1951-61 to be much higher than the increase in the previous two decades. It is mentioned in the Gazetteer of India for the Cachar District published in 1991 that the only explanation to this
disproportionate growth of population during 1951-61 is the influx of refugees following partition of Pakistan.

2.5.2. Population Density of Hailakandi:

As per 2001 census, population of Hailakandi town is found to be 4062 persons per square km. The population density of Hailakandi district as per 2001 census is 409 persons per square km. against 340 persons per square km. for the whole state. A table showing the chronological population growth of Hailakandi is given in this chapter.

Fig. No. 2.2 shows that population density of Hailakandi district is more than the state figure in the year 2001. This indicates that more people are sharing the available infrastructure in the district as compared to the districts of the state on an average.

Literacy:

In Hailakandi Town 22,799 persons out of 29634 persons are literate. Out of this 12,139 are male and 10,660 are female. The overall rate of literacy of the town is 76.94%.

Rate of Literacy

Fig. No. 2.3
The above figures show that Hailakandi district has a slightly higher rate of literacy as compared to the state of Assam.

The following figures explain the detail of literacy of Hailakandi town.

![Pie Chart: Male and Female Rate of Literacy of Hailakandi Town]

- Male: 80.44%
- Female: 73.29%

Source: Census of India.

The level of literacy in Hailakandi town is elaborately discussed in Table-2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No. of Literature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29,634</td>
<td>22,799</td>
<td>76.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, 0-6</td>
<td>3,251</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15,090</td>
<td>12,139</td>
<td>80.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14,544</td>
<td>10,660</td>
<td>73.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is evident from Table-2.2 that out of total male population 80.44 percent is literate and out of the total female population 73.29 percent is literate. Thus, the percentage of literate male population is little higher than that of the female. The percentage of higher education is not so high. In the town, however there is
enough opportunity for higher education. The number of primary and secondary schools is quite large. There are 22 primary schools, 6 High Schools, 3 Higher Secondary Schools, 11 Middle schools, 3 colleges including one Women's college and one Law college and some private schools—both Bengali and English medium. The Assam University, Silchar is situated at Dorgakona, 27 kms. East to Hailakandi town. There is one Medical College and one Engineering college near the University. Although the number of higher education is inadequate, the position is improving day by day.

2.5.4. Religion:

Hailakandi is the centre of various Indian religions especially Hinduism and Islam. The main religions followed by the people are Hinduism, Islam, Jainism and Christianity. The approximate religious wise distribution of the town population is given in Table-2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>20,267</td>
<td>68.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>8,543</td>
<td>29.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Others include Jains and Christians.

Source: *Census of India: 2001.*

Table-2.3 explains that out of total population of the town the Hindus are in majority. However, with many caste-divisions they do not form a compact group. On certain occasions the sense of group units is found among them. As majority of the town population are Hindus, their influence in municipal administration is natural. Majority of the municipal commissioners (members) and civic personnel are Hindus.
As compared to the Hindus, the Muslims and the Jains are solidly united. The real basis of their unity is their sense of being in the minority. Their role in municipal administration is nominal.

The relationship among the Hindus, the Muslims and other is, by and large, cordial. There is enough social and economic intercourse among the people of different religions. In day-to-day life communal feelings do not have any significance. Friendship, family relationship, economic and political interests frequently cut across the barriers of religion. Nevertheless, occasions have arisen when the relationship, particularly between the Hindus and Muslim, has become strained. Such relationship is mainly the repercussions of communal riots in different places in India. Sometimes communal feelings between these two communities become strained owing to certain local incidents. But the period of strained relationship does not last long.

A large number of people follow various sects like Ramkrishna Mission, Satsangha, Hari Om, Radharaman and others.

2.5.5. Caste:

The caste system has played a very important role in the Indian society. It is an important part of our social structure. It is essential, therefore, to examine the potentiality of the caste as a social and political force. Hailakandi is a multi-caste area. The main castes living in the town are Brahmin, Kayastha, khastriya, jogi, marwari, kamar, kumar, Teli, Barui etc. There are other castes also but they are numerically negligible.

These castes can be broadly divided into four categories, namely, the higher castes, the Other Background Castes, the Schedule Castes and the Schedule Tribes. The higher castes traditionally occupy higher social status. In Hailakandi town the people constituting higher castes do not form a united force. Strong sense of rivalry exist among them because they are the main contestants of power.
The backward castes also are divided into different sub-castes. But the sense of 'backwardness' is gradually emerging as a unity bond among them. The democratic processes have made them conscious of their rights and privileges.

The Muslims are also divided into several sects but from the religious and social points of view, they are more united than any other group. Politically they have identified themselves with different groups, engaged in the struggle for power. The caste population of Hailakandi town is shown in Table - 2.4.

**TABLE - 2.4**

**Distribution of Town Population by Caste**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>18,462</td>
<td>62.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>8,312</td>
<td>28.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/C</td>
<td>2,732</td>
<td>9.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/T</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of India, 2001.*

It appears from Table-2.4 that the General category of people is the dominant group. The reason is their numerical, social, political and economic strength. They are the nucleus of political factions. The backward class constitutes the second dominant group. They have adequate representation in the civic body without any reservation of seats. The Schedule Caste is the third dominant group with little numerical strength. The Scheduled Tribes has a very negligible proportion of population in the town. The emergence of new forces has broken the rigidity of the caste system. However, during the time of elections it emerges as an important factor.

2.6. Economic Conditions:

The town has a mixed economy. The population of the town is engaged in different types of occupation.

2.6.1. Economic Base:

The economy of Hailakandi town is based upon tertiary sector which includes trade and commerce and transportation as well as government jobs.
Activities related to trade and commerce and transportation alone comprises of 34.65% of total employment of the town. It is expected that employment related to transportation and trade and commerce is going to increase further after the road linkage from Mizoram is established with the town.

2.6.2. Employment and Income Pattern:

In the town of Hailakandi only 28.92% of the population is employed which is quite low as compared to the state figure (urban Assam) of 30.92% as per the 2001 census. It is found that such a low rate of employment of the town is due to the inadequate industrial infrastructure of the town. Fig. No. 2.7 shows that the workforce participation rate of Hailakandi town is 29% which is lower than the urban Assam by 2%.

2.6.3. Work Force Participation Ratio of Hailakandi and Urban Assam:

![Chart showing workforce participation ratio of Hailakandi and Urban Assam](chart.png)

Source: Census of India.

Among the 7369 employed persons of the town 8.79% are employed in the primary sector, 15.10% are employed in the secondary sector and 75.93% are employed in the territory sector. Table 2.5 gives the occupational structure of Hailakandi town.

**TABLE – 2.5**  
Occupational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage of Persons Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sector</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
Occupational Structure of Hailakandi and Urban Assam

Hailakandi Town

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sector</td>
<td>15.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Sector</td>
<td>75.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. No. 2.8

Assam (U)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>71.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. No. 2.9

Source: Census of India.

The above figures indicate that the rate of industrial activities in Hailakandi town is lower than Urban Assam as the Secondary sector employment of Hailakandi town is lesser than the Urban Assam figure.

The segmental distribution of the town population among working forces of 2001 in various occupational categories has been explained in Table-2.6.
**TABLE - 2.6**

Distribution of the Town Working Force (2001) by Occupational Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Occupational Categories</th>
<th>Total Workers</th>
<th>Male Workers</th>
<th>Female Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main Workers</td>
<td>7806</td>
<td>6,657</td>
<td>1149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marginal Workers</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-workers</td>
<td>21,059</td>
<td>7933</td>
<td>13,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Categories of Non-workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Agricultural Labour</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>*HHI Workers</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other Workers</td>
<td>8,363</td>
<td>6,971</td>
<td>1392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Memo No. ASO(H)/42/Census/2002-2001.dt.03.04.01.*

*** House Hold Industrial.

Table-2.6 shows that there is medium size main workers and marginal workers, and there is maximum number of non-workers. Among the non-workers the number of cultivators and agricultural labour are quite negligible. But this is a natural phenomenon in an urban area; and Hailakandi is no exception to this. The number of Household Industrial workers is also not satisfactory. This is because of the fact that as in case of big industries there is very little number of household industries in the town. Other workers include factory workers, workshop workers, carpenter workers, rice-mill workers etc.

Hailakandi is the main centre of trade and commerce of the district. With the expansion of the activities of a welfare state, there has been multiplicity of developmental departments and all of them have their offices in the town. There has been steady improvement in banking facilities; Major industrialization is spoken of as the panacea of the local life. There is no possibilities of exploring any kind of mineral deposit within the district itself. Therefore, for the future economic prospects of the town, the location of a large-scale industry is essential.
2.7. Political Condition:

Hailakandi has been a centre of intense political activities since long. During the pre-independence days Hailakandi was the stronghold of the Congress Workers. After independence, it became a centre of the sub-division politics. Now the town is the centre of district politics, being the district headquarters. Almost all the national parties —The Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, CPI, CPI(M) and the regional party AGP have their offices in the town. The Congress candidates were returned in the Assembly Elections of 1952, 1957, 1967, 1972, 1983, 1985 from the town constituency. In 1978 CPI(M) candidate was elected from the town constituency to the Legislative Assembly. From 1991 to 1996 the town had been represented in the Legislative Assembly by the BJP. But in 1996 an Ex-Congressman was elected to the Legislative Assembly on United Peoples Party of Assam (UPPA) ticket. Again in 2001 an agitated Congressman who was denied Party ticket was elected to the Legislative Assembly as independent Candidate.

The level of political consciousness in the town is very high. But the average people in the street are disinterested in politics. The Municipal Board of Hailakandi remained under supersession for several times from its inception in 1969. Consequently, the average people have become disinterested in local politics. However, during the time of General Elections (both Lok Sabha & State Legislative Assembly) political consciousness among the town people is noticed.

2.7.1. The Civic Politics:

The Hailakandi Municipal Board was established in 1963. Previously there was Town Committee. Before Town Committee there was Town Fund and Union Board established in 1869. The proceeding of the meetings were preserved since 2nd July 1914. But who was the chairman of the union was not mentioned in the proceeding book of the office of Hailakandi Municipal Board. The signature of the chairman was found but the name was not deciphered. But the name of five members were found. They were—Md. Mahmud Choudhury, Babu Debendra Chandra Sen, Babu S.K. Guha, Hazi A.M. Choudhury and Babu Madhab Charan
Das. The names of three members of the body were found in the Proceeding book of the meeting held in 29th January 1921. They were Babu S.C. Nandi Mazumdar, (EAC) Babu P.K. Dutta and D.C. Mohanta.

The Town Committee of Hailakandi was constituted in 1924. The members of the Town Committee in 1926 were: B.C. Das (Adl. Munseff), K.C. Purakayastha, Lalu Mia Choudhury, B.C. Chakravarty, Babu Prayag Kumar Dutta and Yatir Ali Choudhury.

The prominent Chairman of the Town Committee in different times were - Abdul Matlib Mazumdar, Mantaz Ali Laskar, Abinash Roy, Lokendra Mohan Chakrovarty, Promod Bhattacharjee. The Prominent Vice-Chairman of the Town Committee were - Yatir Ali Choudhury, Suresh Ch. Paul and Naresh Ch. Tarat.

In 1963 the Municipal Board of Hailakandi was established for the first time. But it was not a democratically elected body. It was an Ad hoc Body constituted by the State Government The Government of Assam summoned the first meeting of the Municipal Board on 21st December 1963. The then Sub-Divisional Officer (civil) of Hailakandi M D Raftab was the first Acting Chairman of the Municipal Board. The members were - Hachan Raja Laskar, N.C. Tarat, A.R. Choudhury, D.N. Bhattacharjee, Hari Sadhan Chakravarty, B.L. Sarda, R.M. Das, Har Sundar Chakravarty, J.M. Dhar and Kul Ch. Namashudra.

The first election to the Municipal Board of Hailakandi was held on 18th July 1968. The first meeting of the elected Board was held on 25th January 1969. The first Chairman of the elected Municipal Board was Keshab Ch. Chakravarty and the first Vice Chairman was Haridas Dev. The members of the Board were—Dinesh Ch. Singha, Giyas Uddin Ahmed, Makhan Sengupta, Nripendra kr. Choudhury, Karuna Sindhu Dey, Prafulla Ch. Achaarjee, Jogendra Ch. Sarkar (nominated) and Amulya Debnath (nominated).

The second election to the Municipal Board was held on 5th April 1974. Sri Keshab Chakravarty was elected Chairman for the second consecutive term. Abdul Khalek Laskar was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Board. The members were Dinesh Ch. Singha, Makhan Sengupta, Projesh Debroy, Abdul Khalek
Laskar, Jagdish Ch. Debnath, Lalchand Namashudra (nominated) and Prabhat Ch. Nath (nominated).

The third election to the Municipal Board of Hailakandi was held in 1978. The first meeting of the 3rd Municipal Board was held on 10th January 1979. Sri Ashok Dutta Gupta was elected as Chairman and Sri Mintu Paul was elected as Vice-Chairman. The members were—Lokendra Mohan Chakravarty, Subhas Ch. Roy, Subal Ch. Bhawmick, Bhaskar Bhattacharjee, Ranjit- Saha, Madhu Sudhan Debnath, Jogendra Ch. Das (nominated) and Chandrakanta Devnath (nominated). In May 1980 no-confidence motion was moved against Vice-Chairman Mintu Paul and he resigned on 6th May 1980. On 9th May 1980 Bhaskar Bhattacharjee was elected as Vice Chairman. On 3rd December 1980 no confidence motion was moved against Chairman Ashok Duttagupta and he resigned. On 4th December 1980 Lokendra Mohan Chakravarty was elected as the Chairman of the Board. In the month of May 1982 no-confidence motion was moved against Bhaskar Bhattacharjee and he resigned. On 28th June Mintu Paul was re-elected as Vice-Chairman of the Board. In July 1982 Chairman of the Board Lokendra Mohan Chakravarty was removed from the office of Chairman by passing no-confidence motion. On 10th August 1982 Mintu Paul was elected as the Chairman of the Board. As a result the office of the Vice-Chairman left vacant on 13th August 1982 Madhusudhan Debnath was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Board. So, the period of third Municipal Board of Hailakandi was a period of instability and nasty politics and remained as a black chapter in the history of Municipal Board of Hailakandi.

The fourth election to the Municipal Board of Hailakandi was held in May 1983 and the first meeting of the newly elected body was held on 6th June 1983. Sri Benu Lai Ghosh was elected as the Chairman and Salim Uddin Barbhuyan was elected as the Vice-Chairman. The elected members were—Subhas Ch. Roy, Bhola Deb, Ashok Duttagupta, Ranjit kr. Saha, Ranjit Bhattacharjee, Srinibas Debnath. Two Government nominated members were — Subal Ch. Bhowmick and Radhakanta Das. On June 12th Salim Uddin Barbhuyan resigned
from Vice-Chairmanship and on 16th June 1984 Radhakanta Das was elected as the Vice-Chairman. The term of the fourth Municipal Board of Hailakandi was upto 6th June 1987. But before the expiry of the term then A.G.P. Government suspended the Board and kept it under supersession on political ground. The Government ordered the Sub-Divisional officer (civil) of Hailakandi to supervise the working of the Municipal Board.

On 14th August 1987 the State Government constituted a 10-member Ad-hoc Committee of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi. Sri Bhola Deb was appointed the Chairman of the Board. He took over the charge of the Municipal Board on August 18th, 1987. Jalal Ahmed Choudhury was appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Board. The members of the Ad-hoc Board were - Subhas Ch. Roy, Prabhat Ch. Nath, Subhanendu Gupta, Jahir Hussain Mazumdar, Narayan Sarda, Pradeep Dey, Niladri Roy and Anil Debnath. This was the first Ad hoc Municipal Board of Hailakandi constituted on political ground. The first meeting of the body was held on 20th August 1987.

The Ad-hoc Board headed by Sri Bhola deb was dissolved on 6th December 1990 and the Board came under supersession. Mr. M.C. Gogoi, Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC) took over the charge of the Board as Executive Officer. He continued office till 6th August 1992.

On 7th August 1992 the meeting of the newly elected Board was held under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Sri K.K. Hazarika Sri Ranjit Kumar Saha was elected as the Chairman and Mr. Saidur Rahaman Mazumdar as Vice-Chairman of the Board. The members were:- Sri Bhaskar Bhattacharjee, Sri Himendu Shekhar Bhattacharjee, Sri Madhusudhan Debnath, Smt. Manjushree Debnath, Sri Swapan Kumar Deb, Sri Gourpada Das, Sri Benulal Ghosh, Sri Nagendra Suklabaidya (nominated) and Sri Pankaj Kumar Nath (nominated). Sri Benulal Ghose was elected from two wards i.e. ward No. 5 and ward No. 10. So, there were altogether 9 elected members from all the 10 wards and two government nominated members in the Board. In this connection, it may be mentioned that Sri Benulal Ghose the Commissioner from ward no.5 and 10
did not take oath as Commissioner and never attended the Board's meeting for the reason best known to him keeping both the wards un-represented in the Board in spite of duly elected representative.

The Board headed by Sri Ranjit Kumar Saha was dissolved on 25th September 1996 and the Board again came under supersession. Sri SMZ Chistie EAC was appointed as Executive Officer of the Board. He took over the charge on 26th September 1996. Supersession of the Board continued and Sri Chistie was replaced by Sri Animesh Talukdar, Election Officer, Hailakandi on 1st February 1999. Lastly, Sri Talukdar was replaced by Sri Nabadweep Pathak, EAC, Hailakandi as the Executive Officer of the Board on 26th July 1999 and he continued the office till the formation of the newly elected Board on 4th October 1999.

On 16th June the election to the 10 wards of Municipal Board of Hailakandi was held. Out of 10 wards five candidates from ward Nos. 3,5,7, 8 and 10 on BJP ticket and five candidates supported by Indian National Congress was from 1,2,4,6 & 9 wards. To form the Board and to elect a new Chairman the support of atleast 6 Commissioners are necessary. So, a dead lock arose in that regard. After more than two years of election dead lock was resolved. On 8th September 1999 meeting of the Board was convened, the House has elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman as per the ruling of Honourable Guwahati High Court. following the disposal of the case on reservation of Chairmanship of the Board for woman. But in view of the forthcoming Parliamentary election on 3rd October, 1999 official charge was not handed over to the Board by the Executive Officer of the Board as it would violate the Model Code of conduct of the election issued by the Election Commission of India. On 4th October, 1999 fresh meeting of the newly elected Board was convened under the Chairmanship of Shri Hirendra Chandra Paul, Municipal Commissioner of ward no.6 of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi as the Deputy Commissioner of Hailakandi authorized him to preside over the meeting of the Board. The Executive Officer of the Board handed over the charge to the newly constituted Board on 4th October, 1999.
The House elected Sri Swapan Kumar Deb as Chairman and Smt Shibani Paul as Vice-Chairman as two BJP Commissioners extended their support to the candidates for Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. The present Board consists of 10 elected Commissioners including Chairman and Vice-Chairman and two ex-officio members. The present Board is constituted as follows:

1. Sri Swapan Kumar Deb — Chairman (W/No-9)
2. Smt. Shibani Roy — Vice-Chairman (W/No-1)
3. Smt. Sandhya Roy — Commissioner (W/No-2)
4. Sri Subhendu Bhattacharjee — Commissioner (W/No-3)
5. Sri Hara Prasad Duttagupta — Commissioner (W/No-4)
6. Smt. Usha Chanda — Commissioner (W/No-5)
7. Smt. Manjushri Debnath — Commissioner (W/No-7)
8. Smt. Manika Das — Commissioner (W/No-8)
9. Sri Hirendra Chandra Paul — Commissioner (W/No-6)
10. Sri Shanti Ranjan Debnath — Commissioner (W/No-10)

Ex-Officio Member:

2. Sri Sahabuddin Choudhury, MLA, Hailakandi.

2.7.2. Ad-hocism:

The town committee of Hailakandi was established in 1924. It was upgraded to the Municipal Board in 1963. But it was not a democratically elected body. It was an Ad-hoc body constituted by the government of Assam on 21st December, 1963 with Mr. M.D. Raftalf, the then Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) of Hailakandi as Acting Chairman of the Board and ten (10) nominated members. The Ad-hoc Board continued till the newly elected Board was constituted on 25th January, 1969.
The fourth Municipal Board of Hailakandi was constituted on 6th June. The term of the Board was upto 6th June 1987. But before the expiry of the term the then A.G.P. government of Assam suspended the Board on May 8, 1987 and kept it under supersession on political ground. On 14th August the state government constituted a 10 members Ad-hoc Board with Sri Bhola Deb as the Chairman of the Board. He took over the charge of the Board on 18th August, 1987. The Ad-hoc Board continued for more than three years. It was dissolved on 6th December when the board came under supersession by the order of the government.

2.7.3. The Supersession:

The Municipal Board of Hailakandi for the first time came under supersession on May 8, 1987. The term of the fourth Board was upto 6th June 1987. But the then AGP government suspended the Board and kept it under supersession.

Notwithstanding its smooth administration, the Board was, however, superseded on 6th December 1990 allegedly to replace the Ad-hoc Board by the elected Board without declaring the date of election. But actually it was done by the government on the plea of the communal violence in the town occurred during the months of November/December 1990. The leaders of the town protested against government’s move. They condemned the government for unwarranted supersession of the Board and pleaded for the extension of the Board’s term upto August 1991. But the supersession continued for longtime till the newly elected Board was constituted on 7th August, 1992. On 25th September, 1996 the elected Board under the Chairmanship of Sri Ranjit Kumar Saha was dissolved and the Board was superseded for the longest period of time upto 3rd October, 1999 when the newly elected Body took over the charge of the Board.

2.7.4. No-Confidence Motion:

In the history of the Municipal Board of Hailakandi for the first time no-confidence motion was mooted against Sri Ashok Duttagupta on 3rd December, 1980 after only one year of his Chairmanship. But he resigned before passing the
motion against him. In July 1982 no-confidence motion was moved against the Chairman Sri Lokendra Mohan Chakravarty. He was removed from the office of Chairman by passing the no-confidence motion. No confidence motion was also moved against the two Vice-Chairman of the Board. On May 6, 1980 no confidence motion was mooted against the Vice-Chairman Sri Mintu Paul and he resigned from the post of Vice-Chairman. Again no-confidence motion was mooted against the Vice-Chairman Sri Bhaskar Bhattacharjee on 20th May after two years of his Vice-Chairmanship.

Actually, the no-confidence motion was nothing but an abortive bid of the opponents to dislocate the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. In fact, they were victimized by the narrow town politics and vested interest of certain factions of civic leaders and local politicians.

2.8. THE URBAN PROBLEMS (The Civic Woes):

The scenario of the urban life of Hailakandi began to be affected by different dimensions of civic problems unleashed with the perpetual growth in population and continuous process of shifting rural population toward the urban centre in the context of the New Age ushered in through Independence. The environmental change put the available civic services to severe strain. The major standing civic problems faced by Hailakandi town are summerised below:

2.8.1. Inadequate Water Supply:

The water supplied by the PHED Hailakandi through Municipality is not sufficient for the 30 thousand population of the town. The quantity, quality, pressure, and even the timings of supply of water is not satisfactory. In some areas of the town the colour and odour of the water of the public stand-posts are such that any one at the mere sight of the water is sure to reject it as poison. The source of the contamination may be a leak in the water supply mains.
2.8.2. Water Logging:

Water logging is a serious civic problem of Hailakandi town. During the monsoon season most of the areas of the town remain waterlogged. Take for example, the Railway Station Road and Silchar road area where every year water logging takes place. The people during heavy monsoon have to take off their shoes to cross the areas. Same is case of many other parts of the town. The condition of Model Township is most deplorable. When there is heavy downpour the area take the shape of a sea. Many years have passed but the condition of Model Township remain the same. This is also the case of College Coloney.

2.8.3. Traffic Congestion:

The problem of traffic congestion vis-à-vis the encroachments on footpaths and road sides has become so vexed as almost to defy solution. In most places congestion is mostly caused by the occupation of roadsides and footpaths by frontage owners, shopkeepers, itinerant vendors, street hawkers and keepers of mobile thela-shopes in utter disregard of public interest. Common and complicated cases are those of shopkeepers who make unauthorized projections and constructions in the form of tools, benches, drums, mini signboard and similar other articles kept on footpaths in front of their permanent shops. Tea shop owners spreading out benches and chairs for their customers, timber and bamboo merchants dumping their heavy logs and bamboos on road sides also cause extreme inconvenience and discomfort to the public.

2.8.4. Road Condition:

Road is a symbol of motion which provides an easy means of communication to the urban dwellers from their residences to the place of work and other places. But the road system in Hailakandi is causing great concern to all. Except a few, most of the town roads are narrow, worn-out and having no room for free movement of the incoming and the outgoing vehicles. There are footpaths in some roads but the unevenly set slabs having wide gap in between serve as death traps for the pedestrians. The sides of the roads are also filled with slippery mud during rainy season and these become the sources of dust.
during sunny days. The movement of vehicles is extremely slow which has been intercepted here and there by meandering fast moving two wheelers causing traffic jam in the road. The number of different kinds of vehicles playing through the narrow roads in the town has increased several folds during the last 10 years. But the road conditions have not improved substantially. Bicycle, scooter, motorcycle, autos, rickshaws, light-vehicles, heavy-vehicles, carts, thelas are all playing simultaneously through these narrow roads as a result of which there is traffic jam at almost all the major road junctions and frequent accident. Although widening of the main road will not be adequate considering the high rate of increase of vehicular traffic. Almost no body in the road cares to observe any rule or law of the road and there is chaos in the main roads and streets. There is no sufficient traffic personnel and no alternative arrangement is there for the rickshaw and thela pullers even in the busiest hours of the day. Sometimes traffic police personnel are seen, but they remain helpless spectators being quite unable to control the traffic and some rowdy people intentionally disobeying all rules of the roads.

2.8.5. Speed-breakers:

Unpainted and unscientifically constructed speed-breakers not only damage important parts of vehicles but also make passengers suffer from pain in neck, back and waist due to sudden jerk and jumps. As such, 'speed-breakers' and 'pedestrian crossings' must be painted in black and white. Speed breakers should be erected only where these are unavoidable.

2.8.6. Footpaths and Potholes:

Lack of any road repair works over the years has created big potholes and pits in the roads. In many areas road metals are exposed dangerously posing threat and risk of accidents to pedestrians as well as bike and Car drivers. There have been recent cases of injuries caused to the aged and children. Some roads are full with huge potholes and on rainy days the pedestrians do not see these and there are cases of serious injuries. There is also no provision for proper pavement or footpaths and people have to walk through middle of the road.
There are footpaths in some roads but the unevenly set slabs having wide gap in between serve as death traps for the pedestrians.

2.8.7. Parking Facilities:

There is no parking facilities for vehicle. A few rickshaw stands are there in the town. The number of vehicles, especially cars, has been increasing but most of the roads are narrow and cars are parked anywhere, much to be great inconvenience to the pedestrians and residents living nearby. Most of the owners do not have garage or proper place at home to keep their vehicles in safe custody when not in use. As a result, they park their cars on the public roads. The owners can not keep their vehicles on the public roads for indefinite periods, some times for days and months together, citing want of garage, etc. This obstructs movement of the residents coming out of their houses either on foot or with their vehicles, and daily commuters as well. The Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 under Section 122, inter alia stipulates that no vehicle should be left on public roads in a dangerous position or in a manner that may cause inconvenience to the road users. The municipal authority and police administration do not pay attention to this problem.

2.8.8. Street Lighting:

Another civic Problem of Hailakandi town is the lack of sufficient streetlight. Most of the areas of the town has no street light creating great inconvenience to the pedestrians. The Municipal Board cannot regularly provide streetlight throughout the town. Dark streets, broken lights, fused bulbs and naked wires have become common features in the town thereby posing a serious threat to the citizens. According to informed sources in the Municipal Board of Hailakandi 70 percent of the streetlights in the town are not working.

2.8.9. Mosquito Menace:

Life in Hailakandi town can be really uncomfortable due to mosquitoes and one has to find ways to save himself from mosquito bites especially by night fall. One fail to understand why the town should become a breeding ground of mosquitoes
when the concerned department has at its disposal all the means and scope that is necessary to tackle it effectively.

True, there is no place on earth which is free from mosquitoes. The Government has the might and abilities to contain it. All it needs is the will to do it. What needs to be taken into consideration now is that mosquito population can be kept in check, provided the town is always kept clean. However, Hailakandi town has not trod that path. The drains, the roads, the localities, the market places etc. all have become a dumping ground. Unless urgent effort is made the menace will assume deadly proportions.

2.8.10. Stay Cattle:

Stay cattle nuisance in the busy thoroughfare is another standing problem of Hailakandi town. Cow, cattle, goat even buffalo walk and sleep in the roads of the town causing damage to property, danger to citizens, traffic congestion and accidents. There is no cattle catching squad in the town.

2.8.11. Conservancy and Sewage Disposal:

There is insufficient conservancy and sewage disposal system in Hailakandi town causing serious unhygienic condition throughout the town. Despite a number of measures initiated by the Municipal Board to improve the conservancy system, the problem remained unsolved. The service conditions are deteriorating day-by-day as the drains are not cleared, garbage are piled up along the roadside. Due to the flat surface and old drains which are poorly laid, the drainage system of Hailakndi town is inadequate. The municipal workers clean the drains in the lanes and bye-lanes of the residential areas of the town, leaving the garbages on the roadsides without removing them. These eventually find their way to the drains again. Cleaning and dumping goes on cyclically causing great inconvenience to taxpayers.

All the liquid wastes of the town and some solid wastes finally find their way the Dhaleswari river and Bachair khal (the two natural drainage of the town) passing through the town. Some of them are directly thrown into the river and
others come through some big drains. The river and Canal (Bachair khal) also remove excess the drains, legal and illegal encroachment of the drain, river and canal, the Water-holding capacity of the facilities have been greatly reduced and flood occur in most part of the town in every heavy shower.

2.8.12. Public Health and Sanitation:

Despite a number of public health programmes the recurrence of malaria, measles, tuberculosis, cancer and other disease are yet to be controlled and eradicated in the town. Mosquito menace seems to be a much talked about problem of town life of Hailakandi. Stagnant water, dirty swam and drain and filthy places with unhygienic condition and bushes are breeding ground of mosquitoes.

2.8.13. Environmental Pollution:

The level of pollution in the town is increasing day by day. It is true that there is no industrial pollution in the town. But pollution takes place in Hailakandi town mainly due to discharge of excessive quantity of Carbon monoxide by the old un-repaired vehicles running through the roads of the town, heaps of garbage kept on roadside and even by some of the town dwellers who are using Rail lines, roadside, shrubs and the sandy bank of river Dhaleswari and Bachair Khal as their common latrine.

Inadequate drainage system is also one of the factors responsible for pollution in the town. Garbage and drains are not cleared regularly. In most of the areas there are no dustbins. Rotten heaps of stinking wastes make the Hatbertganj Bazar (the main daily market of the town) more deplorable condition. To collect the best experience of the prevailing situation one can come through the southern road inside the market. During rainy season pedestrians can not come through the road without pushing their handkerchief to their nostrils. One will feel like vomiting while passing through the road. This is the situation in the heart of the town itself.

These are the major problems faced by Hailakandi town. It is a never-ending list; the problems are increasing day-by-day. The last decade has seen a
steady decline in the quality life that Hailakandi town offers to its residents. The complete breakdown in civic amenities is the direct outcome of the fund crunch and the rampant corruption flourishing in the day to day functioning of the municipality. The common man has been unfairly burdened with taxes and tolls at every nook and corner of the town.

2.9. Some Important Findings:

It has been found that the urban self-government in Assam in general and Hailakandi in particular was the creation of the British. But there is a slow pace of urbanization in Assam. This is also true in case of Hailakandi. The growth of urban population in Hailakandi town is comparatively slow. But since 1961 there is a remarkable increase of town population. The history of Urban self-government is also very old. In 1869 the first urban government i.e. Union Board was constituted. It was replaced by Town Committee in 1924. The Town Committee was upgraded to the Municipal Board in 1963.

The scenario of the civic life of Hailakandi town began to be affected by different dimensions of administrative problems unleashed with the perpetual growth in population and continuous process of shifting rural population towards the town. The environmental change put the available civic services to sever strain. The extension of municipal limits and ever-growing public requirements for more and better facilities of housing, drinking water, sewer, sanitation, conservancy etc. further complicating the problems, stretched the functions and responsibilities of the urban administration to a breaking point.

Political problems at the urban local level arise out of the conflict between political actors at the urban local bodies and the state government level that worsens the urban scene. Conflict is bound to occur between them. But the difficulty is that these conflicts turn into open battles and brings chaos and confusion. As a result, the urban government faces difficulties and there is a check on the growth of urban development.
By merely suspending and superseding the municipal board, the state government denied popular leadership and local autonomy to the people by not holding election to the Board after expiry of the term.

However, it is to be noted that in such cases where the Board was suspended there was no perceptible improvement in the municipal works by the machinery which has to render the services during the period of direct management by the government. Rather, there was notice of slackness and negligence in municipal works. It did not show signs of progress.

The most serious problem from which municipalities in Assam suffer is lack of proper local co-operation. Lack of co-operation and civic sense of the town inhabitants lead to complexity of the problems of the Chairman. It is an admitted fact that owing to the non-cooperative attitude of the people, most of the municipalities in Assam are facing acute financial crises. Now-a-days it seems that public opinion is more in support of tax-evasion. Even the public are unwilling to obtain licenses for their bi-cycles. As a result, day-by-day the sources of revenue of the municipalities are being progressively reduced resulting in the helpless condition of the municipalities. Unless people pay their taxes no development work could be undertaken. It is no doubt true that development is interlinked with the proper tax payment by the public.

Further, apathetic attitude on the part of the public puts averse impact upon the urban local government. It is no doubt true that people get the rulers they deserve. In fairness to the municipal Chairman in Assam it may be said that not only their motivations and attitudes but also those of the people of their constituencies are responsible in making them what they are. People are so busy with their daily bread-earning activities that they pay scant attention to the various problems of the town government. Most of them are too poor and uneducated to take any intelligent or knowledgeable interest in the town government or the doing of their leaders. Above all, people do not feel that the town government is their own in which they have a right to maintain an efficient and successful administration and that they could have it especially through their leaders. Due to
this apathetic attitude, the citizens do not ask their leaders that particular issues affecting them be raised or why particular issues were not raised in the municipal board, though some of them may approach their leaders in connection with some mundane matters. This attitude of the citizens towards their leaders also accounts for the easy going, halfhearted, selfish and erring ways of the leaders. Thus, lack of strong popular motivation puts its adverse impact upon urban leadership.

Political parties also cannot be expected to do much in the nature of ameliorating the urban situation as they are confronted by their own problems of organization and leadership. The division and disintegration of political parties at the centre and state level are reflected in the municipal board as elsewhere in the town politics.

Conclusion:

It may be concluded that the problems of urban development centre round the following issues:

(i) Creating an effective and efficient administrative system for the municipality;

(ii) Establishing a framework of urban planning and development;

(iii) Setting forth the clear-cut objectives aiming at the growth of human potential and political objectives; and

(iv) Defining the roles of policy makers, administrators and planners.

The urgent task of the policy planners at the Urban Government would be to make a detailed assessment of the present availability and requirement of basic infrastructure facilities such as roads, footpaths, water supply, market sheds, schools, hospitals etc. and also make demand projection of these facilities for next 10-15 years based on present trend so as to plan for the future requirement.

Development is an on going process and to attain development goals there is need for a proper assessment of existing facilities and planning/drawing
up of schemes based on present and future demand. This would result in the form of a town development plan – showing the present details, present requirements and future requirements.

The mounting problems of Hailakandi town cannot be solved by one day or two. The problems should be tackled in a piecemeal manner. An integrated approach, with due consideration with urban planning and development, if necessary for the solution of the problems of Hailakandi, Town and Country Planning Development, Hailakandi Municipal Board and the citizens should put their heads together to find ways and means to convert present Hailakandi 'A Town of Joy' from "A Town of Sorrow" which at present it is.

References:

4. Ibid.
6. Vide Government of Assam's Notification No. AAA 98/89/Pt/1 Dtd. 29.9.89.