

Urban Chronicles

A Monthly Newsletter

By Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Assam

অসম চৰকাৰ



সত্যমেব জয়তে
Government of Assam

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Amrit Udyan, Guwahati

FOREWORD

*From the desk of the
Managing Director,
Guwahati Metropolitan
Water Supply and
Sewerage Board*



It gives me great pleasure to present the September edition of Urban Chronicles, showcasing how Assam's cities are transforming challenges into opportunities through innovation, resilience, and sustainable progress. Highlights include Margherita's inauguration of a solid waste management plant, Silapathar Municipal Board's conversion of Garbage Vulnerable Points into eco-friendly rest sheds, Teok Municipal Board's emergence as a model of urban innovation and sustainability, and the inspiring journey of Mrs. Nirmala Hazarika Das, whose laundry soap enterprise exemplifies how modest ventures can drive livelihood generation and women's empowerment.

Visakhapatnam's All Abilities Park, an inclusive Urban Space and the discussion on Greenfield, Brownfield, and Greyfield development further underscores how technology and planning are shaping the future of our towns. These initiatives reflect a growing commitment to sustainable and inclusive urban practices that not only address immediate challenges but also lay the foundation for long-term progress.

The Initiative of the Month by the Guwahati Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board reflects our mission to revive Guwahati's water supply systems, resonating with this broader spirit of innovation and service. Together, these stories reaffirm a simple truth: when institutions and citizens act with purpose, Urban Assam steadily moves towards a future that is greener, more inclusive, and full of possibilities.

Warm Regards,

Pallav Gopal Jha
21.9.2025

Shri Pallav Gopal Jha, IAS

Managing Director

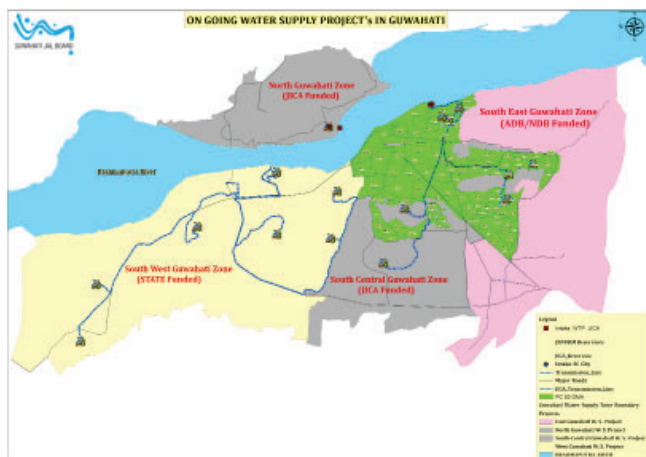
Guwahati Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board

Initiative of the Month

Revival of JICA assisted Guwahati Water Supply Project

Guwahati, known as the Gateway to the North East, is a vital economic and commercial hub situated on the bank of Brahmaputra River. The Guwahati Water Supply Project aims to provide safe, continuous potable water supply, addressing the city's historical water challenges. Despite its close proximity to River Brahmaputra, less than 30% of the residents were connected with piped intermittent water supply systems.

To bridge this gap, Govt. of Assam with the financial aid of funding agencies had initiated 4 projects in Guwahati, viz. the North, South West, South East and South Central Guwahati Water Supply projects.



Map Showing all 4 water supply Zones of Guwahati

However, even after nearly a decade and despite the earnest efforts of all executing agencies, the projects remained stalled, with no clear timeline or certainty about their completion. Citizens of Guwahati had lost all hopes of receiving water ever.



Raw Water Intake under South Central Guwahati Project

A Fresh Turnaround

The scenario changed with the formation of a **dedicated core team**, which introduced revival strategies to bring the projects back on track. The Government of Assam streamlined execution by bringing all projects under a single agency-**Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water & Sewerage Board (GMDW&SB)**-through different Project Implementation Units (PIUs). At the same time, institutional capacities were strengthened, and implementation was restructured to ensure efficiency.

Through this article, focus is brought on the South Central Guwahati Water Supply Project, which is being implemented with assistance from JICA and now SOPD funds.

Technological and Institutional Innovations

The project's revival saw the adoption of technology-driven innovations such as:

- GIS-based asset and consumer databases
- Web and mobile-based consumer management systems
- A unique 17-digit consumer numbering system
- Volumetric billing system
- Centralized SCADA monitoring for real-time oversight

These measures improved transparency, accountability, and operational sustainability.

Empowering Communities: The Jal Sakhi Model

A major milestone in the turnaround was the Jal Sakhi initiative, launched through an MoU signed between GMDW&SB and DAY-NULM on 28th September 2022. This pioneering convergence model brought in members of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) as community-level facilitators and service partners.

Trained in IT tools, soft skills, and service delivery protocols, the Jal Sakhis play a vital role in:

- Conducting public awareness and IEC campaigns
- Mobilizing applications for new house service connections

- Undertaking meter reading, bill delivery, and revenue collection using POS machines
- Collecting water quality samples to ensure compliance
- Acting as a bridge between citizens and the water board for quick grievance redressal

Currently, **105 Jal Sakhis** are actively engaged across **93 commissioned District Metering Areas (DMAs)**, strengthening public trust, boosting revenue efficiency, and improving transparency. For the women themselves, this initiative has been transformative—building financial resilience, digital literacy, and leadership within communities.



Door-to-door visit by Jal Sakhi



IEC & Registration camp conducted by Jal Sakhi

Tangible Progress and Positive Impact

The project started its trial run in July 2022 covering 5 DMAs under the project. Till date, **7 reservoirs out of 8 and 93 DMAs have been completed**, catering potable water to **40,000 households** in Guwahati City.

Although the project is being implemented in phases, the successful commissioning of these facilities has brought renewed optimism to citizens. Engineers now oversee the systems through a **Centralized SCADA Monitoring Center**, ensuring reliable and efficient round-the-clock operations.



Centralized SCADA Monitoring Center installed in the GMDW&SB office

Looking ahead, the South Central Project is expected to be fully completed by 2025. Simultaneously, the other projects—the North Guwahati, South West Guwahati, and South East Guwahati Water Supply Projects—are also progressing. Together, they will ensure that the entire Guwahati Metropolitan Area finally has access to safe, reliable, and continuous drinking water, putting an end to the city's decades-long struggle.

Buzz from the ULBs

TOWARDS A CLEANER FUTURE: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANT INAUGURATED IN MARGHERITA

Margherita Municipal Board inaugurated a Solid Waste Management (SWM) Plant at Ward No. 10 with an initial capacity of 50 TPD, expandable to 100 TPD, in august in presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The facility is equipped with a **Material Recovery Facility (MRF)** for segregation and recycling, a Waste-to-Compost Unit, trommel systems, composting platforms, storage areas, drainage systems, administrative and utility blocks, visitor amenities, parking sheds, and internal roadways. Together,

these systems will enable scientific waste sorting and efficient processing of both biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.

The Margherita Municipal Board aims to achieve **100% door-to-door waste collection** with active citizen participation. Earlier, legacy waste at the site was successfully cleared through biomining, reclaiming land and reducing pollution. The new plant will further strengthen scientific and eco-friendly waste management in the town.

Margherita secured the **19th rank in last year's Swachh Survekshan**, and this project is expected to significantly enhance its future ranking. By integrating **recycling, composting, and sustainable waste processing**, the facility marks a major step towards a cleaner, greener, and healthier Margherita and its adjoining Gaon Panchayats.



Inauguration of Solid Waste Management Plant at Margherita in presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister

Silapathar Municipal Board Transforms Garbage Vulnerable Point into Eco-Friendly Rest Shed

In a significant step towards promoting environmental sustainability and public welfare, the Silapathar Municipal Board has successfully converted a garbage vulnerable point located in front of a school in the municipal area into an eco-friendly rest shed.

The newly developed shed, constructed with locally available and sustainable materials such as bamboo and tokou paat, serves as a clean and welcoming space for guardians and visitors. This initiative not only eliminates an unhygienic spot but also creates an

environment that reflects harmony with nature.

By transforming a waste-prone area into a functional community asset, the Silapathar Municipal Board aims to raise awareness on cleanliness, encourage environment-friendly habits, and demonstrate the potential of sustainable infrastructure in urban spaces.

This effort stands as a model of how innovative, eco-conscious approaches can contribute to both community comfort and environmental conservation.

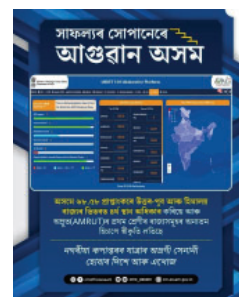


Transformation of Garbage Vulnerable Point into Eco-Friendly Rest Shed

Stories from the First Mile

Assam Secures 4th Rank in AMRUT 2.0 Among NE & Himalayan States

Assam has achieved a significant milestone under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0, securing the 4th position in the Fast Category of states with a score of 68.58 among North Eastern and Himalayan states. The score also aligns closely with that of leading states in the mainstream category such as that of Gujarat which holds the 3rd rank with 68.59. This highlights the state's improving performance in urban reforms and project implementation, comparable with some of the top performers nationally.



As part of the mission, 24 water supply projects across 21 Urban Local Bodies have already been grounded, marking a concrete step towards improving urban services and enhancing the quality of life for citizens.

From Vision to Venture: The Inspiring Journey of Mrs. Nirmala Hazarika Das' Laundry Soap Enterprise

A true entrepreneur is a doer, not just a dreamer. In Tinsukia, a woman entrepreneur has set up a Laundry Soap Industry at Raja Ali Road, Ward No. 3, setting an inspiring example for budding women entrepreneurs.

Mrs. Nirmala Hazarika Das, a housewife and mother living below the poverty line, ventured into entrepreneurship in 2010 by starting a small laundry soap unit in Ward No. 3, Tinsukia, under the brand “Rajnagandha,” to support her handicapped husband and family. Selling in local markets, she sustained her business until the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, which led to a sharp decline in sales, loss of savings, and eventually a halt in operations.

During this critical phase, DAY-NULM, Tinsukia supported Mrs. Nirmala Hazarika Das with a loan of ₹1.5 lakh under the Self-Employment Program, sanctioned by SBI Hijuguri Branch on 9th December 2022. With renewed motivation, she began sourcing raw materials from Guwahati at lower rates, producing about 16,000 soaps monthly. Expanding beyond Tinsukia town, her products now reach nearby districts

as well. After expenses and loan repayments, she earns ₹15,000–20,000 per month and plans to hire two workers to meet growing demand.

She proudly shared that she can now support her family, educate her children, and save from her earnings. Gaining respect as an independent entrepreneur, her success has inspired many homemakers and unemployed youth in the locality to start their own ventures.



Mrs. Nirmala Hazarika Das and her soap brand Rajnagandha

Envisioning Urban

Visakhapatnam's All Abilities Park: An Inclusive Urban Space

Visakhapatnam has set a benchmark in inclusive urban planning with its ‘All Abilities Park,’ inaugurated in 2018. Spanning 2,156 sqm along the Vizag coastline, this neighborhood park is specially designed for differently abled children while promoting interaction with the broader community.

The park ensures accessibility for all and offers innovative experiences, including tactile pavements, textured walls, and imported Singaporean play equipment made of durable rubber. Wheelchair users can access all corners seamlessly. Sensory experiences, large blackboards, and tire-planting areas introduce children to nature and environmental awareness.

Implemented by Greater Visakhapatnam Smart City Corporation Limited at a cost of ₹3.5 crore, the park



All Abilities Park, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

serves children with physical, visual, and hearing impairments without segregation. Schools for differently abled students regularly visit, reflecting growing citizen engagement.

The initiative demonstrates how small-scale, focused projects can enhance quality of life, encourage outdoor activity, and foster community inclusion. Prioritizing

approachability, accessibility, and usability. In Assam, the city parks can also adopt similar models to ensure inclusivity for differently abled citizens. By designing accessible, engaging, and safe recreational spaces, Assam's urban local bodies can promote social equity, community participation, and healthy living while enhancing the overall quality of public infrastructure.

Urban Lexicon

Greenfield Development

Greenfield development refers to constructing new projects on previously undeveloped land, often agricultural, forest, or rural areas, offering a blank slate for cities, industries, or institutions. It plays a vital role in meeting urbanization needs and creating modern infrastructure. In Assam, AIIMS Guwahati at Changsari is a key example, boosting healthcare, investment, and connectivity.

Greyfield Development

Greyfield development involves revitalizing outdated urban areas that are not contaminated but have lost their economic relevance. Unlike brownfields, these sites need modernization rather than remediation. Redevelopment improves land use, revives city centers, and stimulates economic activity. A relevant example is the Assam Urban Sector Development Project, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and executed by AUIDFCL namely —Nalbari, Barpeta,

Goalpara, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, and Golaghat—demonstrating how greyfield infrastructure projects can enhance urban services, optimize resources, and promote sustainable growth without exerting additional pressure on greenfield areas.

Brownfield Development

Brownfield development refers to the redevelopment or reuse of land that has been previously used, abandoned or left underutilized often associated with old industrial, commercial or waste disposal sites. Such areas may require environmental remediation before they can be put to productive use. This approach optimizes scarce urban land, reduces pressure on greenfield sites and promotes sustainable regeneration by converting degraded spaces into usable assets. A notable example from Assam is the North Lakhimpur Urban Forest Project, where a former legacy waste site has been bioremediated and is planned to be transformed into an eco-park.



GREENFIELD

- Untouched land
- Easy planning
- Modern infrastructure
- High environmental impact

GREYFIELD

- Old/underused areas
- Revitalizes communities
- Uses existing infrastructure
- Moderate redevelopment costs

BROWNFIELD

- Polluted land
- Restores urban cores
- Environmental cleanup
- High remediation costs

Key features of Greenfield, Greyfield and Brownfield development

Revolving EDITOR'S DESK Feature of the Month



Bikash Jyoti Kalita
Executive Officer, Teok Municipal Board

Teok Municipal Board: A Model of Urban Innovation and Sustainability

About the Author

Bikash Jyoti Kalita, AUAS (2022 batch), is the Executive Officer of Teok Municipal Board. With an academic background in Geography and prior service in the Assam Forest Department, he brings a strong commitment to nature and sustainability into urban governance. Guided by principles of sustainability, innovation, and community participation, he works diligently to enhance citizen welfare and ensure the overall progress and development of the municipal area.

In Jorhat district, the Teok Municipal Board has emerged as a model of urban governance, sustainable development, and employee welfare. Through visionary initiatives, it has transformed into one of Assam's most proactive and people-centric ULBs:

Streamlining the Employee Work Profile

Teok Municipal Board has taken decisive steps to streamline the organizational structure by categorizing work into well-defined branches, each with specific roles and responsibilities to enhance accountability and service delivery.

- Technical Branch handles infrastructure development, maintenance, and public works.
- Financial/Tax Branch/Accounts Branch is responsible for revenue generation, including property tax and other municipal fees and overseeing financial management.
- Conservancy Branch manages city sanitation, with a dedicated Supervisor monitoring cleanliness and safai karmachari's performance to maintain standards across wards.
- PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) activities are managed by a City Project Manager, with supporting staff for effective implementation of the housing scheme.
- NULM (National Urban Livelihoods Mission) operations are led by a Community Organiser, with

support staff to implement livelihood and skill development initiatives.

This systematic segmentation has not only reduced redundancy and confusion but has also empowered each unit to function more independently and effectively, thereby improving municipal responsiveness and citizen satisfaction.

Eco-Friendly Office and Use of Disposable Banners

Teok Municipal Board has adopted a plastic-free campus, replacing plastic cups, plates, and packaging with steel, ceramic, and biodegradable alternatives. The initiative extends to public events and festivals, where eco-friendly cloth and paper banners replace plastic flex, aligning with Assam's mission to eliminate single-use plastic and setting an example of sustainable urban governance.



Use of disposable banner

Systematic Plantation by Children Along Municipal Roads

In Teok, children have become green ambassadors through a guided plantation program. Kanchan plants are systematically planted in straight rows along municipal roads, fostering environmental awareness while enhancing the town's ecological health and visual appeal.

Revolving Funds for Safai Karmacharis

The Municipal Board has introduced a Revolving Fund Scheme for Safai Karmacharis, offering short-term financial assistance repayable in easy installments.

This initiative supports emergency needs, boosts morale, and fosters a sense of security and belonging among the workforce.

Grooming Services for Safai Karmacharis

Teok Municipal Board supports safai karmacharis through grooming and wellness sessions by providing hygiene kits, uniforms and periodic health check-ups. The initiative promotes dignity of labor, better health, and improved working conditions.



Safai Karmachari Free Health Checkup

Strengthening Local Funds Through Building Permits and Land Sale Tax

Revenue generation has improved through better collection of building permit fees and land sales. Simplified processes and stricter monitoring have boosted compliance, ensuring steady funds for local development, infrastructure, and Safai Karmacharis' salaries.

Micro Nursery: Greening with Innovation and Community Support

Teok Municipal Board has set up a micro nursery that nurtures greenery while promoting sustainability. Discarded plastic bottles are used as seedling pots, reducing the need for conventional plastic grow bags. This cost-effective method saves resources, eases sapling distribution, and encourages a culture of reuse and circular waste management.



Sapling distribution and Plantation

Micro Nursery at TMB

Public cooperation has made the initiative a success, enabling Teok to produce saplings for urban greening while fostering a community-driven recycling culture that turns each plant into a symbol of collective civic responsibility.

Enhanced Cleanliness: Cleanest Municipality Award

Teok Municipal Board reached a significant milestone when it was recognized as the Cleanest Municipal Board in Jorhat District during the 76th Republic Day celebration. This honor stands as a testament to the combined efforts of municipal staff, engaged citizens, and visionary leadership, showcasing Teok's strong commitment to cleanliness, sanitation, and civic responsibility.



Cleanest Municipal Board Award

A key factor in this success was the strategic execution of waste management. Under the guidance of the Executive Officer, a comprehensive route map for garbage collection vehicles was developed by the Urban Technical Officer, ensuring efficient door-to-door coverage in all wards. This systematic approach reduced collection gaps, minimized complaints, and enhanced cleanliness across residential and commercial areas. Additionally, previously non-functional garbage vehicles were repaired and reinstated, boosting operational capacity, saving public funds, and ensuring uninterrupted sanitation services.



Route Mapping Operation

With strengthened coordination between departments, active community participation, and data-driven operations, Teok stands today not just as a cleaner town—but as a symbol of what determination, planning, and teamwork can achieve.

For sharing your thoughts on the Urban Space in Assam, please mail us at: dohuaurbanchronicles@gmail.com

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