

Urbanization in Assam: A Brief Sketch

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The state of Assam is situated in the heart of the North-East corner of Indian subcontinent . It is located in between latitude 24*10 'N to 27*58'N and longitude 89*49' E to 97* 26'E. The total geographical area of the state is 78,523 square kilometers . The proportion of urban areas and urban population in Assam remains very low as compared to the national average. The century begins with 2.34% of urban population in 1901 as against 10.84% of national average. It marginally increased to 4.2% in 1951 and further to 12.72% in 2001 as against the national average of 17.29% and 27.78% respectively for the same periods. However ,the distribution pattern of urban population clearly indicates three areas a major concentration—around Guwahati in the west ,Dibrugarh–Tinsukia in the east, and Silchar in the south .The process of urbanization is extremely slow in the hill districts. There are 110 urban centers in the state in 2001. At present there are 189 urban centers (2011) in the state.

The urbanization of Assam in the last decade is encapsulated in the following table:

Census Year	Total Town	Total Population	Total Urban Population	Percentage-%
2001	110	26655538	3439240	12.90%
2011	189	31169272	4388756	14.08%

It is notable that amongst the North-Eastern states, Assam has the largest urban population of 4.3 million (2011). Guwahati has about 0.9 million urban population, while the other large cities of the state are Nagaon (population-116,355),Dibrugarh(population-138661) and Silchar(population-172,709). From this picture it shows that Assam has a very well distributed urban population across the state.

As per the population, the ranked of urban centers of Assam as follow(2011)

Rank-2011	District	2011-Urban %	2001-Urban%	Others
1.	Kamrup-metro	82.8	80.23	
2.	Dima Hasao	28.7	31.60	

3.	Jorhat	20.1	17.14	
4.	Tinsukia	20.0	19.47	
5.	Dibrugarh	18.4	19.28	
6.	Cachar	18.2	13.94	
7.	Bongaigaon	13.8	15.87	
8.	Goalpara	13.7	8.14	
9.	Nagaon	13.0	12.2	
10.	Karbi Anglong	11.8	11.3	
11.	Nalbari	10.65	3.99	
12.	Dhubri	10.4	12.29	
13.	Sibsagar	9.6	9.24	
14.	Kamrup	9.4	4.43	
15.	Golaghat	9.2	8.54	
16.	Karimganj	9.1	7.33	
17.	Sonitpur	8.9	10.56	
18.	Lakhimpur	8.8	7.33	
19.	Barpeta	8.7	9.1	
20.	Morigaon	7.7	4.89	
21.	Chirang	7.4	5.77	
22.	Halakandi	7.3	8.12	
23.	Dhemaji	7.0	6.79	
24.	Kokrajhar	6.3	6.11	
25.	Darrang	6.1	5.5	
26.	Udalguri	4.6	4.37	
27.	Baksa	1.3	0.0	

District wise urban population-2011 census,pp-48

Amongst the states of North-East, Assam has got the prevailed of having river alignment in the urban framework .The state capital is the real administrative center of the entire North-Eastern region ,being at the gateway of the region. The urban centers in Assam are found mostly along the Brahmaputra river and Barak river ,which have lots of contributions in the culture and commercial development of Assam . Railway has formed the growth of towns along the river alignment. Exploration of oil has also supported the growth of most of the towns of upper Assam and Guwahati and Bongaigaon of lower Assam . During 1971-91 shows a tremendous growth of urban population in the hill districts of Assam. The decadal growth rate in Karbi-Anglong is seen to be 295.42% followed by N.C Hills district as 281.78% during that period. District wise growth rate shows a significant concentration of urban population in the newly formed district of Dhemaji followed by the district of Cachar and N.C Hills. The other districts of this region like Karimganj and Hailakandi remain below the state average. Golaghat ,the other newly formed district also shows a high level of urban concentration.

At present there are 88 notified towns in Assam. These are divided on the basis of living population in these centers.

Size- Class	Population	Town Committee/ Municipal Board(TC/MB)
Class-I	100000- above	4
Class-II	50000- 100000	10
Class-III	20000- 50000	23
Class-IV	10000- 20000	31
Class- V	5000- 10000	16
Class- VI	< 5000	4

Total= 88

Yet, actual urban development is not place in Assam. There are certain shortcomings in proper development of urban centers .

>The state government can draw up policy statement on urbanization for implementation at the state level. It is important that all states recognize their responsibility and take steps to evolve urbanization policies and programmes on their own.

>Identified the need for planned development of cities and towns and also for an integrated approach to rural and urban planning in a regional framework .

>Identified the role of industrialization in urban development . It cleared a policy aimed at the establishment of new industries away from big cities .

>Plan established an agency, Housing and Urban Development Corporation–(HUDCO) to provide funds for urban authorities and urban institutions to finance schemes for the construction of houses in urban areas .

There are also some other regional problems which hamper to growth urban areas. These are isolated geo-graphical condition, lack of better means of transportation and communication, illiteracy, lack of common awareness ,etc.

Urbanization policy can't be simply treated as an isolated problem of cities and towns , but regional impact of urbanization needs to be examined as well. Plans must have flexibility to provide for ever growing and ever-expanding city boundaries and provide quality of life to all inhabitants . Secondly, people participation in preparation of policies , perspective, plan, development plan and annual plans should be ensured through elected representatives in the Municipal Council / Corporation and ward committees .Third , a well maintained information system can make possible the fine-tuning of the plan proposals at the various stages of implementation of the plan according to the changing urban scenario. The best conceivable way of detaching urban policy from the apron of bureaucrats and political personnel safeguarding dominant class interest is to educate the poor, ignorant and apathetic with information about the role state decision-making on urban issues .Similarly, the urban local bodies and the town planning departments should work under the same state department for better coordination . The cost recovery procedures and revenue collection methods of urban local bodies are also needed to be strengthened .

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