

Abstract of the Thesis

Title: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF BALURGHAT MUNICIPAL AREA IN DAKSHIN DINAJPUR DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

The present study on Balurghat Municipal area is embodied with the urban problems and their effects on the people. There are some motivating factors which attract the researcher to study a particular town like Balurghat viz. – partition of Bengal as a causative factor behind the origin of Balurghat town, rapid increase in population due to heavy influx of immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan, rural depopulation in the surroundings of the town, changes in the trend of population growth as well as land use pattern and related problems. The town Balurghat experienced several unplanned phases of urban expansion over the decades. As a result, flood vis-à-vis water-logging becomes one of the chronic problems for the town which ultimately resists the acceleration of socio-economic and cultural prosperity of Balurghat. Hence, it is clear that as the population increases, the problem of water-logging also increases simultaneously. Since 1990, the situation became the worst because of natural factor coupled with the human factor have aggravated the menace of inundation and water-logging in the town. It is true that river Atreyee has undergone several shifting of her courses upon this aggradational plain over the last 200 years. But the decay of the drainage conditions of both the channels of *Danga Khari* and river Atreyee is not too much natural as it is much more by the unprecedented human interferences into the fluvial system. Ongoing construction of the new urban sewer and storm-water disposal system according to the Master Plan is on the final stage. It is expected that the age-old problem of water-logging in Balurghat town may be mitigated comprehensively through this plan only with few exceptions in a year when there will be unprecedented high flood level in river Atreyee. Citizens as well as the municipal administration are very hopefully looking forward to overcome this menace in the near future.

There is no denying that the overall transport system of Balurghat town is now quite better what it was ten years ago. The days of painful journey of the citizen are now almost become to an end by the introduction of railway track while the availability of super quality express road (SH-10) makes it more convenient. However, such situation will definitely attract the government as well as the capitalists to establish several kinds of agro-based and small scale industries in and around Balurghat town. A survey has been made for the Balurghat-Hili railway track and the work is on progress. So it can be expected that in the near future Balurghat must join with Bangladesh through railway network. If it is possible a

new horizon will open in the trade and commerce sector of Dakshin Dinajpur District which will ultimately strengthen the socio-economic structure of the District as well as of the Balurghat town. Once the partition made the town Balurghat almost infirm and may be the railway connection with Bangladesh in near future will unveil a new chapter in the socio-economic, cultural and political aspects of Balurghat. Citizens are counting days in the state of that dream.

Generation of solid waste continues to increase in urban India with rapid urbanization, rising incomes, changing consumption patterns and a shift from recycling to a throw-away society. In any urban areas, the problem of solid waste management is very acute due to the dense development and congestion. SWM is an obligatory function of ULBs in India. Most of the ULBs are unable to cope with the challenging task of collection, transportation and disposal of solid wastes not only due to rapid urbanization but also due to the unavailability of required open spaces near the urban centres for land filling. Therefore, wastes often accumulate in open spaces, fallow lands, streets, stagnant water bodies and even in the rivers causing serious health and environmental problems for the urban dwellers and also for the rural people living nearer to the town or city. Not only that the accumulation of uncollected waste pollutes ground water as well as surface water through leaching and run-off respectively.

However, in case of Balurghat town, SWM consumes a significant proportion of municipal budget but revenues from the service are nil. The Municipality is also often under-staffed and lack of adequate number of vehicles to transport wastes. Disposal of waste is becoming an even more serious problem as the existent dumping yard is going to be unable to take more waste in the future while the availability of land within the accessible distance becoming scarce. Management of municipal waste is a service which needs efficiency and also substantial financial support in order to bring about improvement in the service. But the present situation in respect to SWM in Balurghat town is far below the wanted level. The huge amount of waste generated every day makes a severe threat to the urban environment of Balurghat and this is a burning problem like all other towns of West Bengal. Three essential components are required in this ground on regular basis—Collection, Transportation and Disposal of such wastes with keen attention and probable innovation wherever necessary.

The deficiency in the water supply system may be solved through the implementation of the ongoing 'Water Supply Scheme' under JNNURM. In respect to the upliftment of health-care system, keen attention should be given particularly on the District Hospital as it is the only hope for the common people. It is very hopeful event that few schemes are already approved from the government side and few are waiting for approval to open some new

wards in District Hospital like Neo-natal ward, Nutritional rehabilitation centre, Thalasemia day-care centre, Genetic ward, 4 bedded ICCU, Special clinic for diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Rupees 10 crores has announced for each to construct another 200 extended beds and for promoting the District Hospital to Super Specialty Status. Citizens are eagerly waiting for those fine days.

It is a challenge for India's urban planning to accommodate an additional 10 million urban dwellers per year, provide them with adequate public services and infrastructure, create opportunities for economic development, and to ensure that urbanization is environmentally sustainable. It will be a democratic and participatory planning process so as to incorporate the needs of the people, particularly poor and socially as well as economically disadvantaged groups. In order to make the urban planning and development process sustainable, it would be appropriate to interlink between the planning framework comprising national level strategies, regional level strategies, metropolitan level strategies and city/ town level as well as ward level land use and development plans and strategies.

State Government needs to take concrete steps to constitute the legal and institutional framework that should provide the ULBs with adequate infrastructure and manpower to undertake the preparation of such plans. It should be accelerated further by developing urban and regional information system and providing access to remotely sensed data, aerial photographs, and GIS techniques to build a complete database for the Balurghat Municipal area. With such strong database the Balurghat Municipal area will be capable for coverage of urban population with basic urban services.

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