

## URBAN INFRASTRUCTURAL SCENARIO OF COOCH BEHAR TOWN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PUBLIC AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

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### Abstract

Infrastructure is basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function. The urban population needs a number of facilities which are essential to lead a modern urban life. These facilities do not develop uniformly in each segment. It has been known that Educational facility, Medical facility, Water supply, Transport and communication and other Social aspects are related to urban centers. It has analysed the nature and various facilities of the social services and also their proper utilization by the way of awareness towards the social services of the study area. It is known to all that, the infrastructural facilities help to promote development of any region. But, at present, the infrastructural facilities of Cooch Behar are insufficient to develop of public utilities and services as those facilities are inadequate due to different economical and socio-cultural barriers. So, it requires more development. That is why; the researchers want to point out those lacking public amenities and facilities through the differential studies and also find the way out of these barriers. Moreover, it is also important to see whether development of these urban facilities has been influenced by the population of this area. This paper makes an attempt to complete the task of preparing the necessary analysis of urban infrastructure of Cooch Behar (With special reference to Public amenities and facilities) which may become a tool for the formulation of the development strategies of the area under consideration.

**Keywords:** *Infrastructure, Scenario, Amenities, Facilities, Segment, Barriers, Development*

### Introduction:

The term 'Urban' refers to towns or cities in which most of the people are engaged in trade, industry and tertiary activities. According to census of India, a settlement which has more than 5000 population; density is about 400/sq. km. and more than 75% male population are engaged in non-primary economic activities along with a municipality or notified area committee is termed as urban area. (Mandal, 1999)

### About Urban Infrastructure:

The urban infrastructure is defined as the strength of the city; its roads, bridges, and transit networks, its water, sewer lines and waste disposal facilities; its power system; its public buildings; and its parks and recreational areas. (Hanson, 1984). The urban infrastructure consists of water and sewerage facilities, surface water drainage, highways, transportation, electricity supply, telecommunication and other networking systems and facilities. It also includes different type of social facilities for the maintenance of standard of living for urban dwellers; healths, welfare, education, open space, public laws and administration, (OCED, 1991). Urban infrastructure can be categorized in two ways. One is in the sense of the services, which carries out from the physical set up and other is the physical facilities itself. (Fox, 1994)

### About the study area:

Cooch Behar town "the city of beauty" is situated at the centre of the district. It is the part of Cooch Behar block no.-II. The town lies between the latitudes of 26°17'57"N to 26°21'00"N and longitudes of 89°25'49"E to 89°28'30"E. Cooch Behar town is located on the side of NH-31B at 153 Km from Siliguri and 771 km from Kolkata. The Torsa River flows by the western side of the town. It is the largest town and district head quarter of Cooch Behar District with an area of 8.29 sq. km. The 20 wards of the town are densely populated within 2.5 sq.km of its central periphery. The main feature of this town is the existence of ponds, parks, ground and heritage buildings. A major portion of land of this town is under settlement and commercial area.

### Rationality of selecting the topic and area:

Cooch Behar is the oldest urbanized area in North Bengal and in West Bengal it is the oldest one. It was the capital town of "Coach Dynasty". According to Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed, since 1707 A.D., Cooch Behar became a developed and mechanized capital town (Debnath, 2007). It also has a good political importance too. This town is very near to international border of Bangladesh and state border of Assam. This town is also having a good tourism aspect both in the sense of a long historical background and sub-Himalayan physical set up in its neighboring areas. After independence Cooch Behar was not developed properly along with above mentioned features. Cooch Behar town is also poor in its infrastructural services, though it was more developed in pre-

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independent era. For these reasons the researchers have tried to analyze and found out the basic needs.

#### Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To find out the socio-economic scenario of the residence of the study area.
- 2) To identify the inadequate infrastructural public services of the study area.
- 3) To analyse the level of amenities and facilities of the people of the study area.
- 4) To identify how municipality improves the quality of urban services.
- 5) To suggest different strategies for micro level development of the study area.

#### Methodology:

In order to study the present social services scenario in Cooch Behar Municipality area, the methodology adopted is a rationalistic one comprising of the details outlined as follows:

The study is mainly based on primary and secondary data sources. Researchers have adopted following to Complete this paper. In the pre-field stage, the collection of basic information from different books, publications, journals and reports published by Govt. of west Bengal, census report, published and unpublished sources was done. The second stage was followed by field investigation based on interview and observation, making personal visit to the Cooch Behar municipal office, Cooch Behar public health and engineering office, Cooch Behar B.L.O., District information office, Cooch Behar N.B.S.T.C. depot, Cooch Behar head post office; fire station; hospital; electricity office, etc. for collection of different valuable data. Both the primary and secondary data have been analyzed here and interpreted.

#### Analyse of population:

Cooch Behar town is one of the important urban centers of Cooch Behar district. The total population of Cooch Behar town is 76874 according to 2001 census report. In 1981, population figure was 62127 and in 1991, it was 71215. So, there has been almost stable increase of population unlike in other parts of the country.

#### Ward-wise density of population and Male-Female ratio

Ward No.	Area (km)	Population	Density of population/sq.km	Male	% of male	Female	% of female
1	0.42	4655	11083	2436	52.33	2219	47.67
2	0.26	1800	6923	912	50.67	888	49.33
3	0.25	3788	15152	1900	50.16	1888	49.84
4	0.28	3487	12453	1755	50.42	17129	49.58
5	0.20	3592	17960	1897	52.18	1695	47.82
6	0.20	3469	17345	1668	48.08	1801	51.92
7	0.17	1807	10629	890	49.50	917	50.50
8	0.50	5643	11286	2913	51.62	2730	48.38
9	1.15	4775	4152	2448	51.27	2327	48.73
10	0.90	4407	4896	2224	40.47	2183	59.53
11	0.30	3885	12950	1893	48.73	1992	51.27
12	0.32	4484	14012	2176	48.53	2278	51.47
13	0.22	3220	14636	1565	48.60	1655	51.40
14	0.18	2508	13933	1220	48.64	1288	51.36
15	0.19	3732	19682	1880	50.36	1852	49.64
16	0.24	4339	18079	2198	50.67	2141	49.33
17	0.50	2419	4838	1378	56.97	1041	43.03
18	0.45	4655	10344	2292	49.24	2363	50.76
19	0.93	5232	5625	2633	50.32	2599	48.68
20	0.63	5007	9447	2727	54.46	2280	45.54
Total	8.29	76874		39008		37866	

Source: Office of the Cooch Behar municipalities, 2011

From the above table, it is clear about the scenario of the population in Cooch Behar town. The density of population of 2001 was high in ward no. 15, because this ward is mainly residential and highly congested of land holdings. The density of population of Cooch Behar town is 9386/ sq.km. and the male-female ratio of the town is 971. Literacy level is one of the important parameter by which the quality of population can be judge. Here total number of literate population in 2001 census is 62053 which are 80.72 percent of the total urban population.

**Occupational Structure, 2001**

Total population	Main worker			Marginal workers			Non-workers		
	Total	male	Female	Total	male	Female	Total	male	Female
76874	23874	19837	4037	815	541	274	52185	18630	33555
	31.06	83.09	16.91	1.06	66.38	33.62	67.88	35.7	64.3

Source: District information centre, Cooch Behar

From the above table, researchers observe that not much more population are engaged in different works, only 31.06% are main worker, 1.06% marginal worker but rest 67.88% people are not engaged in any work. The figure of the non-worker female shows female participation in different work is very low in Cooch Behar town.

**Infrastructural set up of the Cooch Behar town:**

The land of glorious past with rich heritage and culture lies on the eastern part of West Bengal bordering Assam in the east and neighboring country Bangladesh in the south. Coochbehar is the only planned town in the entire North Bengal having the memories of the royal heritage. Municipality is responsible for providing basic services. The water is supplied by the municipality using its groundwater resources. The surface drains, mostly uncemented, drain into the Torsa River. Most of the roads are metalled, and street lighting is available in the town. The Public Works Department is responsible for road maintenance in the town and on the roads connecting Cooch Behar with other towns in the region. Health services in Cooch Behar include a government District Hospital and few private nursing homes.

**Condition of housing in Cooch Behar town:**

The housing condition of poor class people in urban areas is really pitiable. The characteristics are close houses in the neighbors; the high price of land and the labour remaining near industries have highly increased the occupancy rate of houses. The houses are made very close to each other, so that the full utilization of land could be made. There are utter windows, the presence of only one door and privacy is the first priority of such houses. The houses of slums are made of mud wall in which there is a dark kitchen room, followed by unhygienic living and sleeping room. Actually, the housing problem has been of recent origin because the construction of houses dose not cope with the increasing population. The housing condition of Cooch Behar town can be referred to have congested. The house have grown more or less linear pattern. Most of the houses have new style, some houses are old pattern. The old pattern houses are mostly heritage type. The plinth of the houses is much above the road level. There is no garden in front of the houses. Some of the houses have veranda and ground floor.

**Building materials and conditions:**

In Cooch Behar, much of the old houses are built with brick and '*chunsurki*'. In many houses, walls are made of brick or bamboos which are covered with mud. There are three types of houses structure of Cooch Behar town 1) Pacca structure, 2) Katcha structure and 3) Big houses.

**1) Pacca structure:** Pacca houses occupy 50 percent of the total houses of the Cooch Behar town. These houses are mainly made of cement, sand and stone chips. The wall of these houses is pacca but the roofs of some houses are made of tin.

**2) Katcha houses:** Katcha houses occupy 40 percent of the total houses of the Cooch Behar town. Katcha houses are mainly seen at the slum areas of Cooch Behar town. These houses are mainly made of bamboo. The floor of same houses is pacca but the roof is made by tally or tin.

**3) Big houses:** Big houses occupy 5 percent of the total houses of Cooch Behar town. The walls of those houses are made of with brick, sand, and cement. In same houses walls are decorated with plastic paint.

**Water supply:**

After air, nothing is more important to human life than water. The water supply system of any urban area depends on its source. Water supply system depends on both under ground and river water. But in Cooch Behar town water supply system is totally of underground water. Through the pumping system, water rises from the underground also. Total water supply system of Cooch Behar town is going on through pumping system, water rises from underground. Around municipal area, 9 pump houses and 4 treatment plants are situated. At present, the PHE Dept. takes all the responsibility. The total water supply system circulated through 7 overhead reservoirs. The total capacity of 7 reservoirs is 9.5 gallon. PHE dept. supplies water in a certain time table wise. It is not possible to supply water to the all residents. Cooch Behar PHE dept. supplies pump water to the residents for 7 hours at three different times. In Cooch Behar town, the water supplied through pumping system is distributed through pipe network. The networks of pipe are spread all over the town according to demand. The length of total piping network is 71.5 km. However there is no house hold pipe line connection in this town. Around the road side, the number of

street hand post is 129. Many of the residents get their water from this stand post. The residents of slums area who cannot get the facilities of stand post they get their water from hand pumps. In Cooch Behar municipality, there are 646 hand tube wells. So, slum population is mostly dependent on hand tube wells.

**Electricity:**

Electricity is one form of energy and is essential ingredient of economic development. It is required for commercial and non-commercial uses. Commercial use of power refers to the use of electricity power in industries, trade, agriculture and transport. Non-commercial uses include power required for domestic, lighting, cooking, use of mechanical gadgets, like the refrigerator, air conditioner, computer etc. Supply of power in Cooch Behar town is controlled by the West Bengal State Electricity. The main source of power is situated in Khagrabari. The consumption of electricity per day at Cooch Behar town is 7.9 mw. Total municipal area is divided into ten major electricity zones according to consumption of power.

**Transport:**

Transportation means movement of goods and passenger from one place to another place. From producers, goods are made available to consumers for consumption by means of transport. Means of transportation can thus be seen as being very essential for the smooth working and further development of the life of a city or region. A well developed system of transport facilities, the movement of people and goods are important in increasing the level of consumption. Cooch Behar is well connected with other part of state by roads and railways. The nearest broad gauge railway station is New Cooch Behar, 5 km. away from the town. There are two Broad gage railway stations in this town, namely New Cooch Behar and Cooch Behar Town. The town has also has bus routes, connecting directly Kolkata, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Muzaffarpur, Tejpur, Guwahati etc.

**Health Service:**

With the existing infrastructure of 400 beds in Cooch Behar hospital, it provides health facilities to the inhabitants of Municipality and other blocks. There are also 9 Nursing homes with 220 beds. Besides that the existence of more than 25 Pathological Clinics in the town, one medicine bank and blood bank provide the health services of this town.

**Educational Facilities:**

Urban planners and officials are becoming aware about the fact that facilities for education are the important part of our urban, social and cultural environment. The educational structure of a town mainly depends on educational institution available in a town or city. As regards to educational facilities, there are 26 Govt. Primary schools, 19 Private Primary schools, one Junior Basic school, and 15 Higher Secondary schools. Besides these, the town also holds 4 degree colleges, one polytechnic and one B. Ed training college.

**Market facilities:**

Within the municipal peripheries there are four daily markets, two of which are whole sale markets and three commercial markets in the town.

**Industry:**

The existing industrial activities of the town are minimum. There is no major industry in the town. But special attention may be paid to modernized pisciculture in this town as there are few small and big ponds.

**Drainage system and Sewage:**

The municipal authority has managed to construct pacca drain of about 81.50 km. and 36 km. kutchra. The town has its own trenching ground but no underground sewage system

**Recreation:**

The town has 3 cinema halls, there are 2 play grounds in the town namely M.J.N. stadium and Cooch Behar stadium. There is a library in the town and two major Parks. There is huge number of Clubs in the town, who organize several cultural programmes on different festivals.

**Findings:**

- 1) Drinking water supply within the urban area by the Municipality is inadequate if compared with the number of population and houses.
- 2) Garbage (solid waste, hospital waste etc.) problems have been faced by the town recently. This garbage is throwing here and there by the dwellers and commuters too.
- 3) Though the all roads within the urban area are connected together at right angle, but, the traffic signal system of the town is not much developed properly.  
There is also low and obsolete traffic system and weak governance for implementation of laws in the town.
- 4) Though street light service within the town is found, but, there is insufficient street light service according to necessity of the dwellers.
- 5) In the sense of Intra-urban movement within the town, the transportation problem is also there due to lack of auto service, city bus service etc.

- 6) Inadequate medical service facility is another infrastructural problem of the town.
- 7) Though a large number of primary and higher secondary institutions in the town, but, there are insufficient higher education facilities in the town. Consequently, there has been remarkable “brain drain” found in this area to take the higher education elsewhere in India and abroad.
- 8) There are few market centers in the town, which are very insufficient in number.
- 9) According to urban population in the town, the number of recreational centers is very meager.
- 10) There are low commercial activities and no industrial activities within the town. Due to this reason job opportunity for the town dwellers are not adequate.
- 11) Roads and footpaths are misused or blocked by the urban dwellers due to inadequate parking zone for vehicles and footpaths are often occupied by the hawkers.
- 12) Sanitation problem is also found in slum areas within the cities. Because there is no sanitation or poorly opened unhygienic sanitation system is found.

#### **Conclusion:**

Cooch Behar town has a unique historical background since 1510 A.D. The urbanization process of Cooch Behar town has been occurred since more than three centuries. From the above discussion, it is evident that infrastructural as well as public services (amenities and facilities) of that town are the result of various unscientific urbanization processes of occurrences. Though, there are some advanced techniques of urbanization followed by the “*Coach dynasty*” in the pre-independent era i.e. all the roads of the town are connected together at a right angle and all the houses of the town are square in shape. But, along with this facilities, Cooch Behar town are not rapidly growing if compared with population and commercialization due to lack of transparency. If Central Government, State Government, municipalities and other organizations takes some strategic development for that purpose, the town becomes a popularized urban area within the State as well as in the country in near future.

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