

CHAPTER- XIII

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATION AND TOURISM

13.1.0. Assam being the gateway to the other States of the North Eastern Region of the Country, the need for development of transport and communication sector in the State is of vital important for speedy economic development of the region. Due to its geographical isolation transport has been a major bottleneck in the process of economic progress of the State. The existing infrastructures and facilities of transport and communication in the State are hardly adequate enough to meet the requirements. The State is no doubt served by all the modern means of transport viz., roads, railways, waterways and airways but there is enough scope for further improvement of the facilities. The position of the State with regard to the existing means of transport and communications is described briefly in the following paragraph.

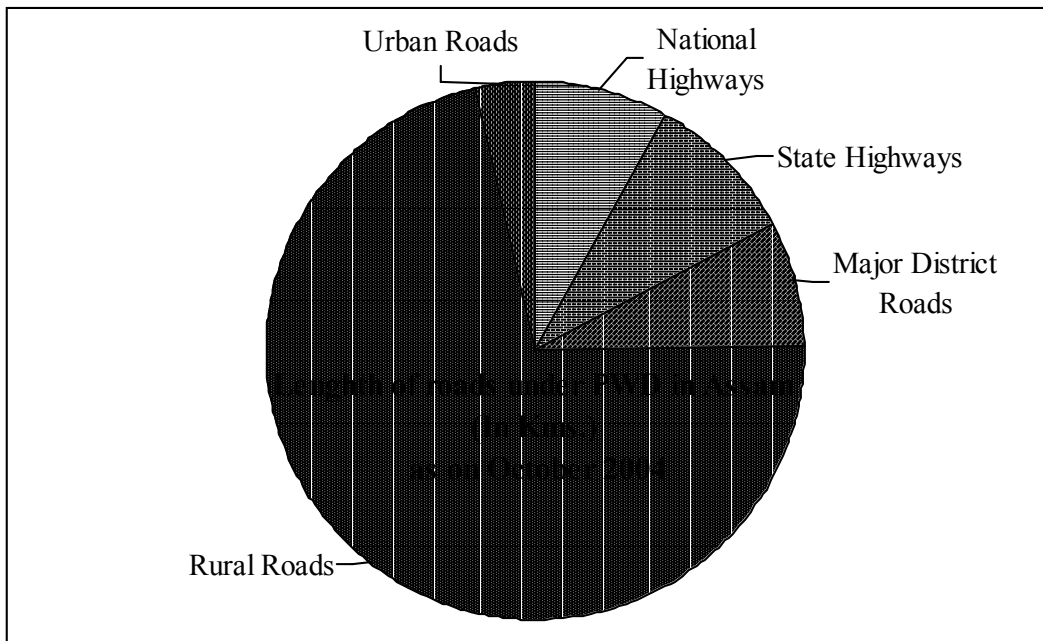
ROADS :

13.1.1. In Assam Public Works Department is mainly responsible for maintenance and development of the infrastructure of the road communication of the State.

13.1.2. The total roads under Public Works Department (PWD) in Assam was 35104 Kms (including 2787 Kms under National Highways) till the month of October 2004. Out of the total PWD road length only 6446.60 Kms (Excluding Highways) were surfaced roads and the rest 25870.24 Kms. were un-surfaced roads.

The road length under Public Work Department in Assam for 2004 (as on October 2004) is shown in Tables 13.1

TABLE- 13.1	
LENGTH OF ROADS UNDER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT IN ASSAM (In Kms.)	
Category	As on October 2004
1	2
National Highways	2787.000
State Highways	3281.131
Major District Roads	2636.710
Rural Roads	25148.300
Urban Roads	1250.710
Source : Office of the Chief Engineer, P. W. D., (Roads), Assam.	



Besides the Public Works Department, the Municipal Corporation/ Boards as well as the Town Committees of the State also maintain roads under their respective jurisdiction. The table 13.2 shows the District-wise Roads Length under the Municipal Corporation Boards and Town Committees in Assam.

TABLE-13.2
DISTRICT-WISE LENGTH OF ROADS UNDER MUNICIPAL CORPORATION /
BOARDS AND TOWN COMMITTEES IN ASSAM, 2002.

(In K.M.)

District	Total Road Length	Surfaced		Unsurfaced		
		Blacktop	Water bound Macadam	Gravelled	Motorable	Non-Motorable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Dhubri	89.143	15.391	1.821	24.250	16.911	30.770
2 Kokrajhar	56.432	11.761	-	7.200	29.051	8.420
3 Bongaigaon	123.590	14.522	4.020	38.740	10.980	55.328
4 Goalpara	91.000	34.250	6.000	15.000	4.000	31.750
5 Barpeta	127.594	39.540	18.146	27.122	17.123	25.663
6 Nalbari	27.418	12.596	3.370	6.657	3.430	1.363
7 Kamrup	575.355	195.460	12.573	143.936	115.600	107.786
8 Darrang	101.126	28.290	0.400	31.185	24.237	17.014
9 Sonitpur	118.821	31.866	0.510	39.673	21.587	25.185
10 Lakhimpur	90.310	21.660	-	35.430	28.220	5.000
11 Dhemaji	47.620	6.200	1.000	14.920	3.500	22.000
12 Morigaon	93.760	4.300	-	16.800	72.660	-
13 Nagaon	271.436	60.550	19.740	72.383	36.610	82.153
14 Golaghat	117.926	31.157	1.200	30.910	40.660	13.999
15 Jorhat	58.900	5.220	-	7.100	-	46.580
16 Sivasagar	90.387	27.786	2.333	41.515	7.285	11.468
17 Dibrugarh	105.525	29.600	2.420	50.500	5.300	17.705
18 Tinsukia	274.637	115.845	4.575	109.952	6.795	37.470
19 Karimganj	58.312	8.938	5.400	20.000	-	23.974
20 Hailakandi	59.414	16.190	7.500	2.990	4.208	28.526
21 Cachar	103.717	28.937	1.100	30.000	1.680	42.000
Assam	2682.423	740.059	92.108	766.263	449.837	634.156

Source : Directorate of Municipal Administration, Assam.

ROAD TRANSPORT:

13.2.0. The most important means of communication for the movement of goods as well as passengers traffic in the State is road transport. In the road transport system of the State both public and private sector operators are playing equally important role. The Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC), a State Government undertaking is mainly concerned with the movement of passenger traffic on the nationalized routes of the State, while the private sector road transport operators are involved in the intra-State movement of both goods and passenger traffic throughout the State. As a step towards improvement of passenger amenities the State Government has taken up the task of construction of an inter-State Bus Terminus at Gorchuk to facilitate inter-State transportation of passengers.

ASSAM STATE TRANSPORT CORPORATION (ASTC):

13.2.1. The “State Transport” was started by the Assam Government in the year 1948 with 4 Nos. of buses initially operating between Guwahati and Nagaon. Gradually the Transport Network was expanded by the Government and the erstwhile “State Transport” was converted into a Corporation viz. the “Assam State Transport Corporation” on 30.03.1970 with the objective for providing economical and coordinated transportation to the commuters. Since, then ASTC has crossed a long period of time but it had to fend with certain constrains like overstaffing, uneconomic fare structure, mushroom growth of private buses, providing services on social obligation at the cost of economic losses etc. These factors had led to gradual deterioration of the Corporation and reached such a stage that its closures were seemed inevitable. However, during the year 2001 the State-Government has taken some dynamic steps for revival and re-organisation of the Corporation as mentioned below:

- (i) Introduction of “Voluntary Retirement Scheme” with fund provided by the Government. A total Nos. of 1781 employees availed voluntary Retirement thereby saving around Rs.80.00 lakh per month on Salary.
- (ii) Implementation of “Self Employment Scheme 2001”. The private Buses are taken in for operation under ASTC and so far more than 1437 Nos. of such Buses have been registered under the scheme.
- (iii) Repairing of shut-down Buses and purchasing of new Buses. The ASTC is now operating a fleet of 347 Nos. of Buses of its own with increased revenue return.
- (iv) A scheme for providing “Scratch Card” is introduced to attract the passengers purchasing ticket worth of Rs.75.00 or more in ASTC Buses and Private Buses under ASTC. The Scheme is helping immensely in generating better revenue.
- (v) The scheme for advertisement on bus bodies and hoarding at prime location with commercial utilization of spaces has been taken up by the ASTC for generation of revenue.
- (vi) The cargo and courier services have been started. Thus, the ASTC has generated employment avenues for about 6000 unemployed youth through the above schemes and services.

13.2.2 As per data available, the total road length covered by the Assam State Transport Corporation is 8130 Kilometres. The fleet strength of A.S.T.C. was 361 in 2003-2004 which comprised of 347 Buses, 7 Trucks, 2 Cars, 4 Tankers and 1 Crane. The average number of passengers travelled daily was 1.30 lakh during 2003-2004

13.2.3. A rapid increase of the numbers of Motor Vehicles on road in Assam has been observed over the years. The density of Motor Vehicles in Assam was 7 (seven) per sq. km. during 2001-2002. The total Nos. of different types of Vehicles on roads in the State was 670580 at the end of 2003-2004 as against 588259 in 2001-2002. Out of the total vehicles on road during 2003-2004, about 60 per cent was Two Wheelers and the rest 40 per cent comprised of Motor Cars, Jeeps, Buses, Trucks etc. The growth in the No. of vehicles on road in the State may be seen from the Table -13.3.

Year	Number of Vehicles
1	2
1981	87644
1991	249323
2000-2001	534885
2001-2002	588259
2003-2004	670580

Source: Office of the Commissioner of Transport, Assam

13.2.4. The total revenue earned by the Department of Transport during the years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 were Rs.128.81 crore and Rs.140.49 crore respectively and thus the increase in revenue collection was 9.0 per cent in 2003-2004 over the previous year.

Besides, to provide fast and comfortable services to the commuters of the Greater Guwahati, and to create self-employment among the unemployed youth, Trekkers Services have been introduced.

The Department has also proposed to computerise all check gates and District Offices to maintain proper records of revenue collection, registration of vehicles, issue of driving licences etc.

RAILWAYS:

13.3.0. The railway route length in Assam at the end of 2003-2004 was 2517.23 kilometres comprising 1227.70 kilometres under Broad Gauge and 1289.53 kilometres under Metre Gauge. These route lengths of railways remained same during the current year also. The proportion of Broad Gauge route length to the Railway Route works out at 48.0 per cent for the State. Taking into account the total Railway route length of 63140 kilometres for the country as a whole during 2001-2002 Assam's share in the country's railway route length turns out to be around 4.0 per cent during the year.

13.3.1. Various developmental activities in the Railway sector continued to be undertaken in the State including extension of railways line. During the last couple of years a good number of new passenger trains were introduced to connect different places within the State viz., inter-city trains linking Guwahati and Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Jorhat, Nagaon, Bongaigaon and Farkiragram, apart from daily trains between Lumding and Badarpur. The Railways run a number of inter-State trains linking Guwahati and Dibrugarh with other important places of the country, such as Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Tiruvantapuram, Coochin, etc. The three bridges at Saraighat, Kaliabhomora and Pancharatna across the river Brahmaputra have greatly facilitated the surface communication system in the State. The bridge named Naranaraya Setu, linking Pancharatna in the South and Jogighopa in the North was opened in 1998. The Saraighat and Naranarayan Setu are Rail-cum-Road bridges while the Kaliabhomora is only a road bridge. With the completion of the Naranarayan Setu, and the construction of railway track along the south bank of the Brahmaputra linking Guwahati with Pancharatna has eased the transport problem and also resulted boost up of economic activity in the south bank of lower Assam.

INLAND WATER TRANSPORT:

13.4.0. The Bramaputra and Barak are the two most important navigable rivers of Assam. There are also numerous tributaries of these two rivers, which are navigable by country boats. The Brahmaputra has already been declared as No.2 National Waterways. At present, two public sector organisations, viz., the State Directorate of Inland Water Transport (IWT) and Central Inland Water Transport Corporation (CIWTC) are operating water transport services between Guwahati and Kolkata exclusively for movement of goods.

The Department of Inland Water Transport, Assam is operating 61 numbers of Ferry Services for the purpose of public utility. These Ferry Services carried around 30.91 lakh Passengers and 2.82 lakh M.T. Cargo everyday during 2001-2002. The Department has earned revenue worth Rs.114.43 lakh in 2001-2002 against Rs.121.94 lakh revenue earned in 2000-2001 through running of these Ferry Services.

AIR TRANSPORT:

13.5.0. Assam is well connected with the rest of the country through Air Transport. The State has the highest number of civil airports and these are Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport at Guwahati, Salonibari, at Tezpur, Rowrah at Jorhat, Mohanbari at Dibrugarh, Lilabari at Lakhimpur and Kumbhiragram at Silchar. The Lilabari Airport in Lakhimpur District was renovated recently to facilitate air traffic movement of nearby District of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Besides, the Indian Airlines there are several other private commercial airlines services such as Sahara, Jet Airways etc. have been operating services to and from Guwahati, Kolkata, Delhi and some other places of North Eastern Region of the Country during the last couple years.

POSTAL SERVICES:

13.6.0. The Postal and Telecommunication facilities in the State have been growing steadily in recent years. The Assam Postal Circle created in the year 1988 with Headquarter at Guwahati serves the entire State of Assam. There are 9 Postal Divisions and 2 RMS Divisions to serve the 23 Revenue Districts of Assam. According to information available the total number of Post Offices in the State was 3978 at the end of 2001-2002 as against 3942 Post Offices during the year 2000-2001, of which 3978 number of Post Offices were located in rural areas and 286 numbers in urban areas. There are 3 Night Post Offices in the Circles comprising Guwahati GPO Dibrugarh HPO and Silchar HPO. The average area and population served per Post Office in the State works out to be 20.05 K.M. and 5844 Nos. respectively during 2001-2002. The coverage in Kilometres by Postal Communication Network by different modes of Postal Mail conveyance viz. Railway, Waterways, Motor, Runner and other means is reported at 34172 Kms. To extend better facilities to the customers, the Speed Post Services with 4 National Centre, 90 Booking Counter and 22 State Point-to-Point Centre are functioning under the Assam Postal Circle. During the year 2001-2002, the postal revenue of Rs.20.91 crore was realised under Assam Circle as against Rs.18.00 crore realised during 2000-2001. A total of 6 Head Post Offices and 200 Sub-Post Offices serving under the Circle have been modernized upto the year ending 31-03-2002 with installation of Multi-purpose Counter Machines (MPCM).

13.6.1. The Assam Telecom circle was formed in January, 1987 after bifurcation of the erstwhile North-Eastern Circle. The Headquarters of the circle is located at Guwahati. As on 31st March, 2003 the No. Of telephone Exchanges in the State stands at 567, of which 153 are located in urban areas and 414 in rural areas. The telephone density in the State measured in terms of coverage per 100 population is found to be 1.84 in Assam as against 3.8 at all India level. There were nearly 4.79 lakh telephone connections working in the State upto the end of March, 2003. The No. of internet Stations (nodes) in the State was 14 with 9238 connections till March, 2003. The total revenue realised during the year 2002-2003 was Rs.274.34 crores.

TOURISM:

13.7.0. The State of Assam is best known for her unique natural beauty with Flora and Fauna, Historical Monuments, Pilgrim Centres, Tea Gardens and its colourful cultural festivals. The Assam tourism is mainly based on Wildlife, Tea-tourism and Historical Monuments etc.

13.7.1 Infrastructure Development:

With a view to exploit the State's manifold tourism potential and also for the economic interests of the State, the State Government is taking various steps for development of Tourism Infrastructure in the State. During the last two years, 14 (fourteen) such tourism infrastructure projects are reported to have been completed with total investment of Rs.489.06 lakh. Some of the projects are as mentioned below.

- 1) Upgradation cum expansion of tourist facilities at Kaziranga.
- 2) Construction of tourist complex at Rajib Gandhi Wild-Life Park at Orang, Assam.
- 3) Upgradation of Tourist lodge, Guwahati.
- 4) Upgradation cum expansion of Tourist facilities at Bhalukpong.
- 5) Tourist Resort at Biswanath Ghat.

13.7.2. On going project

As many as 23 nos. of infrastructure Projects with total outlay of Rs.1465.00 lakh are in various stages of implementation. A brief account of some of the such major projects are given below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Projects	Approved Cost (Rs. in Lakh)
1.	Computerization of Services	40.00
2.	Development / Beautification of river front along Brahmaputra, Guwahati- (Ph-II)	100.00
3.	Sound & Light show at Talatal Ghar, Sivasagar	55.38
4.	SEL show at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakhetra, Guwahati	80.00
5.	Development of Dighalipukhuri with provision for craft Village	89.99
6.	Construction of Tourist Lodge at Tinsukia	100.00
7.	Construction of Craft Village at Guwahati	185.00
8.	Construction of facilities for pilgrimage at Kamakhya Pilgrim Centre by providing toilet facilities semi permanent structure for Ambubachi Mela etc.	110.00
9.	Eco-Tourism Resort at Bhalukpong	90.00
10.	Eco-Tourism Resort at Manas	90.00
11.	Central Financial Assistance for Luxury Cruise Vessels for plying between Kaziranga and Guwahati, Assam.	140.00

13.7.3. Vision for the Future

During the Tenth Five Year plan period beginning from 2002-2003, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India have introduced the following three new schemes.

- (i) Integrated Development of Tourism Circuit.
- (ii) Integrated Product, Infrastructure and Destination Development.
- (iii) Rural Tourism.

(i) Integrated Development of Tourism Circuit

Under the scheme the Government of India had identified 6 (Six) Eco-Tourism Circuit in the country and North East Circuit is one of them which includes places viz. Guwahati, Kaziranga, Majuli, Sivasagar, Tezpur, Bhalukpong in Assam, Shillong in Meghalaya, Kohima in Nagaland and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Government of India has sanctioned Rs.242.00 lakh for the following projects during 2002-2003.

- (a) Brahmaputra River front Development at Guwahati,
- (b) Development of Ethnic Village at Bhalukpong, Tezpur,
- (c) Camping Site at Kohra Ranga, Kaziranga,
- (d) Road Signages of Assam.

(ii) Integrated product, Infrastructure and Destination Development:

This Scheme related to the identification of Tourism Destination or Product in the State. The Assam Government has submitted the detailed project report for Integrated Development of Heritage & Eco-Tourism at Majuli under this scheme. The Government of India had sanctioned Rs.382.25 lakh against the scheme and Rs.325.21 lakh have already been released during 2002-2003 as Central Financial Assistance.

Rural Tourism:

Under this Scheme, the Government of India has released Rs.14.04 lakh to the State Government out of sanctioned fund of Rs.46.83 lakh for promotion of rural Tourism to exhibit the art culture and heritage of rural life.

Public Private Partnership:

13.7.4. Tourism is one sector, which cannot grow and sustain with Governmental efforts alone. It requires private initiatives for investment and promotion. The State Government has endeavoured to intensify private sector investment and participation in management and development of the project already set up and also for establishment of new projects. Keeping in view these objectives, the Assam Tourism Development Corporation (A.T.D.C.) in association with private participation has taken up 32 nos. of various projects for Development of Tourism Sector in the State. Some major projects with private participation like (a) Amusement Park at Guwahati, (b) Ropeway Project at Kamakhya, (c) Eco-Tourism Project at Bhalukpong and Manas, (d) Luxury Cruise Vessel Project between Kaziranga and Guwahati, (e) International Trade and Tourism Centre at Paltanbazar are in various stages of implementation. The Central Government has sanctioned Rs.200.00 lakh as project cost of Luxury Cruise Vessel Project between Kaziranga and Guwahati and have released Rs.179.33 lakh to the State Government.

Arrival of Tourist :

13.7.5. The volume of tourist traffic and magnitude of revenue earning by the State over the last three years are shown in table-13.4.

TABLE –13.4
NUMBER OF INDIAN AND FOREIGN TOURIST TO ASSAM
AND REVENUE EARNED FROM THE TOURISTS

Year	Tourist staying in Tourist Lodges of the Directorate		Tourist Staying in other accommodation like Hotel etc.		Total Revenue earned from Tourist Lodges only (Rs. in lakh)
	Indian	Foreign	Indian	Foreign	
1	2	3	4	5	6
2000-01	14016	486	961954	6920	35.87
2001-02	15373	456	1675299	4755	38.89
2002-03	18427	520	1222135	5466	41.03
2003-04	19894	508	2010213	6337	60.44

Source : Directorate of Tourism, Assam.