

Tripura	960,981	26.18	16+26=42
N.E. India	8,216,069	18.17	210+195=405
India	377,105,760	31.16	4041+3894=7935

*The first figs. stand for statutory towns and second figures for census Towns.

Source : Census of India, 2011, Rural Urban Distribution.

Most of the towns of North-east India are very small and based on tertiary (administration, trade, transport and communication, education, etc.) services rather than on industries. In fact out of 405 towns in the region about 200 have less than 20,000 persons in each. These are based initially on trade and commerce and transport and communication, subsequently there grow up educational institution, bank and health centre. However, a few of these towns and a few belonging to the next higher category (20,000-49,999) are found to have growth on some sort of secondary activities. These include sualkuchi, Tongla (tea industry), Rangapara (tea), Nazira (tea and oil), Namrup (fertilizer and natural gas), Doom Dooma (tea), Naharkatiya (natural gas and oil), Dergaon (tea), Bokajan (cement), Duliajan (oil), Chabua (tea), Kailasahar (coal), Umrangso (hydroelectricity), Mariani (tea and Rly. junction) and a few others.

There are only eleven upper-medium sized towns (50,000-99,999) in the region. These are Tura, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, North Lakhimpur, Bandardewa, Nirjuli-Naharlagun-Itanagar complex, Sibasagar, Kohima, Dimapur, Dispur, Luming and Karimganj. It may be noted that all these eleven towns belonged to the same category during the 2001-2011 period. It shows that there has not been towns.

There are not many large (Class-I : with a population of more than one lakh in each) cities in north-east India. Of the eleven such cities now found in the region five are state capitals. Guwahati is the largest city in the region. Although the Guwahati corporation area supports a population of 963729 as per the census of 2011, the Kamrup Metropolitan District has a population of 1,044,832. Guwahati is not only the capital of Assam the threshold of the region and has many subsidiary and servicing industries, besides being the most important educational, Cultural and commercial centre of the 'Seven sister'

URBANISATION

So far urbanisation is concerned, it is a recent phenomenon in north-east India. There emerged only 12 towns in this region in the later part of the nineteenth century. These are Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Guwahati, Tezpur, Nowgaon (Nagaon), Sibasagar, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Shillong, Imphal and Agartala. With the turn of the century new towns like Jorhat, Nazira, Tinsukia, Digboi, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Kohima, Aizawl etc. came into being. However the level of urbanisation on the average, is still very low. This is essentially because of poor industrial growth and lack of adequate development of transport and communication system in the region. The table below (No.37) show that the region has now 405 towns :

Table-43

North-East India : No. of Towns and Urban Population, 2011

State	Urban Population	Urban Population as % of the total	No. of Towns
Arunachal Pradesh	313,446	22.67	26+1=27
Assam	4,388,756	14.08	88+126=214
Manipur	822,132	30.21	28+23=51
Meghalaya	595,036	22.08	10+12=22
Mizoram	561,977	51.51	23+0=23
Nagaland	573,741	28.97	19+7=26

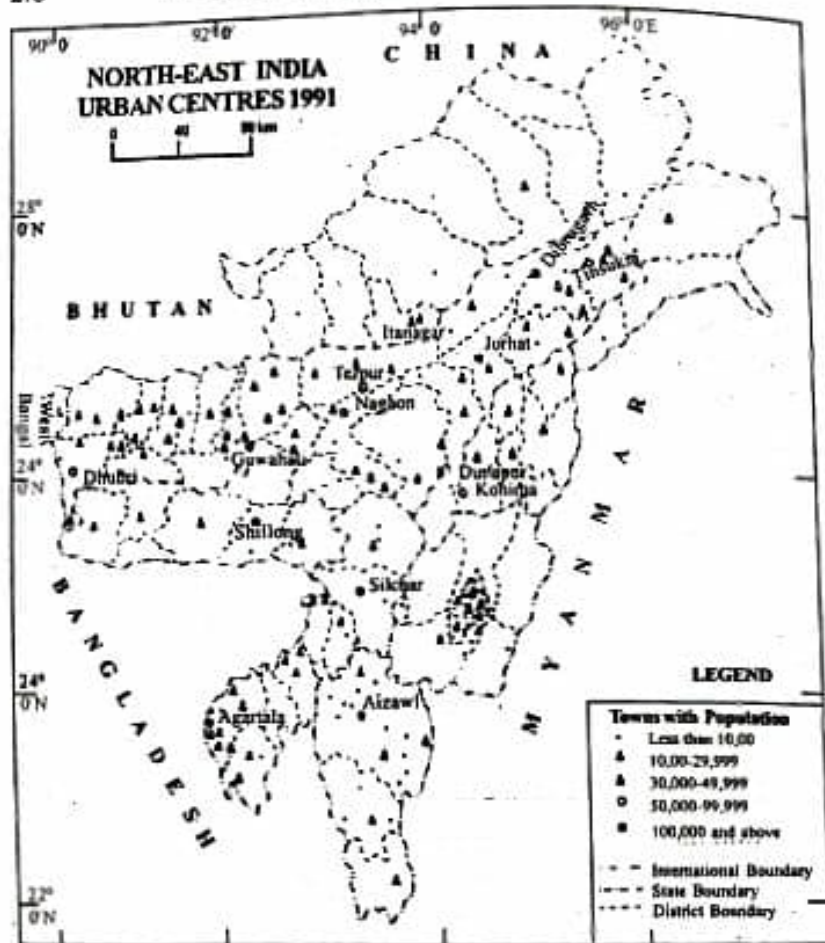


Fig. 23

states. **Shillong** the capital of Meghalaya is the second largest city of the region with a population of about 3 lakhs. It is one of the best and largest hill stations in south Asia. It is an important cultural and educational centre and a tourist resort. **Imphal**, the capital of Manipur, again with a population of about 3 lakhs, is an important administrative, educational and cultural centre of north-east India. The people of Manipur are advanced in art and culture and games and sports. Imphal has many household, cottage and minor industries. **Sitchar** with a

population of about 2.29 lakhs is the largest city in the Barak Valley. It connects Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura by surface with the rest of the country. It is also an important educational centre. It supports many household industries. **Aizawl**, the capital of Mizoram, is an up coming city. It has been growing very fast in the last few decades and has a population of about 2.5 lakhs. There has been a significant migration of rural population of the state to this capital city leading to its rapid expansion. **Agartala**, the capital of Tripura, is also a rapidly growing city. It has now a population of about 2.5 lakhs. Agartala is an important educational and cultural centre, apart from being a commercial centre and a hub of minor industries. In Assam other class-I (2011 census) towns are Jorhat (153249), Dibrugarh (154019), Nagaon (14713), Tinsukia (125637) and Tezpur. The last named town has joined the Class-I category in the census of 2011 with a population of 100477 which includes that of the immediate suburbs.

There has been a slow rate of urbanisation in north-east India compared to the nation as a whole. The number of town as per the census of 2001 was 245 in the region and it has increase to 405 in 2011. The percentage of population living in the towns in the region in 2001 was 15.51 which increased to 18.26 in 2001. Even this is much lower than 31.31% of the country as a whole. So far the individual states within the region is concerned Mizoram is the most urbanised one with 51.51% of its people living in its 23 towns. It is followed by Manipur with the urban population accounting for 30.21% of the total. Nagaland comes next with 28.97% of the population living in its towns. It may be noted that Nagaland has made a significant stride from 17.02% of urban population living only 9 towns to 28.97% living in as many as 26 towns. Tripura's achievement in urbanisation during the corresponding decade is also significant. It had only 17.10% of the population living in its 23 towns which increased to 26.18% and 42 towns. This reflects development in the socio-economic condition of the state. The progress in the rate of urbanisation is slow in case of Meghalaya (22.88% and 22 towns), Arunachal (22.67% and 27 towns and Assam (14.08% and 214 towns.)

TREND OF URBANISATION

Urbanisation is a geo-social phenomenon that emerged with some significant social, economic and cultural characters in the late mediaeval period in Europe along with the industrial revolution. It came to our country in the late eighteenth century with the introduction of the British rule. Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai came up as urban centres in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as the **British East India Company** established their trade, defence and administrative headquarters in these three ports. Urbanisation was introduced to north-east India only in the later part of the 19th century with the annexation and consolidation of British rule. The three centres that emerged as the towns in the middle of the 19th century in NE India are Guwahati as the seat of British Commission of the then northern Assam, Agartala and Imphal as the capitals of the princely states of Tripura and Manipur. In 1874 Assam was made a separate state and subsequently Shillong was chosen as its capital. Thus these four places came up as towns from about the late eighteen-seventies. With the growth of tea industry and opening up of steamer services from Kolkata along the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, a few river-ports like Dhubri, Goalpara, Tezpur, Dibrugarh, Silchar etc. came up as trade centres. These were (except Goalpara) also district headquarters and quickly these grew up into towns. Thus it is seen that by 1891, there grew up 13 towns in north-east India (10 in Assam, and one each in Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura). All these were small towns with a population of less than 10,000 in each, except a few. By 1901 the number of towns grew only to 15.

North East India being an area of subsistence economy, industrialization being almost absent and transport and communication being poorly developed, urbanisation progressed in a slow pace in the region. Whatever urbanisation took place at that time was based on tertiary activities. In fact, between 1901 and 1950, there grew up only a few towns as district or subdivisional administrative headquarters and as railway junctions. Besides these, there also came up a few towns as service centres of the tea garden areas. The following table gives the number of towns, urban population and the

percentage of the total population living in the towns in a few selected years.

Table-44
North-East India : Some Demographic Data, 2001

State	No. of Towns/Cities	Total Urban Population	Proportion of Urban Population to Total	National Urban Population (percentage of Total)
1891	13	78,000 (Approx.)	2.00 (Approx)	7.5
1901	15	87,000 (Approx.)	2.30 (Approx)	10.84
1951	27	4,59,875	4.96	17.29
1961	66	11,02,899	7.11	17.97
1971	101	18,46,685	9.43	19.91
1991	195	43,82,005	13.88	25.72
2001	245	59,72,078	15.51	27.78
2011	405	82,16,069	18.2	31.16

Source : Census of India, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1991, 2001 & 2011.

There has been a very slow progress of urbanisation in the first half of the twentieth century. While the number of towns during 60 years from 1891 to 1951, grew from 12 to 30, the total urban population grew from less than 80,000 to about 4.6 lakhs. The proportion of urban population to the total, during this period was insignificant, being less than even 5%. The proportion of urban population in the country itself was very low. But in north-east India the same is still lower.

It was after the independence that the process of urbanisation relatively picked up, partly because of setting up of new administrative centres to take administration nearer to the people under the national government. It is noticed that as many as 40 new towns were constituted during the nineteen fifties, raising the total number of towns in the region to 66 in 1961. Simultaneously the urban population also increased by more than two and a-half times. It is not worthy that the proportion of national urban population did not record growth of the urban population during that decade is the settlement of a large number of refugee population from the then East Pakistan in the towns,

commercial places and railway stations and junctions of the region.

There had been another spate of urbanisation during the period 1971 and 2001. It is the tertiary activities like opening up of new offices, setting up of new administrative headquarters, expansion of transport and communication, growth of the tempo of trade and commerce, that gave a boost to increase in the number of urban centres and urban population. This is also the period when there was a large scale migration of local people from the rural areas to the towns. The number of towns increased from 101 to 245 and the urban population more than trebled during this period, although the percentage of urban population to the total did not rise significantly because of too rapid a growth of the total population. It is also to be noted that the proportion of urban population in the region remained significantly lower than the national norm, mainly because of lack of industrialisation.

Another important aspect of the trend of urbanisation is the growth of small towns in the region. However, during the period 1971 and 2001 there grew up also some medium-sized and large towns. The following table shows the trend of increase of towns in various size-classes :

Table-45

North-East India : No. of Towns in different size-classes, 1891-2001

Year	Class I 1,00,000 & more	Class II 50,000 -99,999	Class III 20,000 -49,999	Class IV 10,000 -19,999	Class V 5,000 -9,999	Class VI Less than 5000	Total No. of Towns
1891				1	7	5	13
1901				2	8	5	15
1951	—	1	7	7	4	8	27
1961	2	3	12	9	3	10	66
1971	3	4	12	37	31	14	101
1991	8	7	32	58	55	35	195
2001	10	12	43	72	67	41	245

Source : Census of India 1961, 1971 1991 & 2001.

In the last decade of the 19th century and the earlier half of the 20th century there grew up only a few small sized towns. But after independence the towns began to grow not only in number but also in their relative size. By 1961 there appeared two class I towns, namely Guwahati and Shillong, while Dibrugarh, Imphal and Agartala rose to Class II category. Between 1971 and 2001 the number of Class I rose to 8, that of Class III town 32 (from 12). Similarly the number of Class IV towns, Class V and Class VI towns rose to 58, 55 and 35 respectively. The growth of the number of these small-sized towns is partly because of migration of the local ruralites to the centrally located places, which also turn out to be service centres. However, a rapid growth of population in the large and medium sized towns of the region is an important trend of urbanisation in the last three decades.