

# JNNURM: A MISGUIDED MISSION FOR TRIPURA

Though four years have passed, only some reforms have taken place but many are still pending in Agartala. **Biswendu Bhattacharjee**, noted Journalist of Tripura has reviewed three basic components of JNNURM - water supply, sewerage and sanitation and public transport system under CSE 10<sup>th</sup> Media Fellowship on JNNURM awarded to him

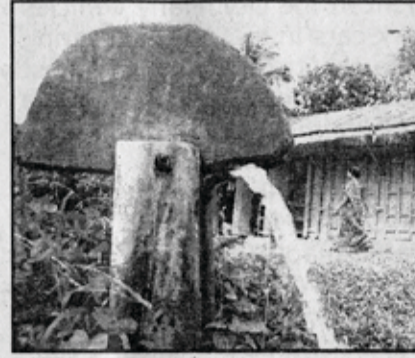


It's fact, speed of Agartalaits become slow and travel becomes uncertain in the days of mouse-click lifestyle and age of remote control management. At a time when entire world is pleading for adoption and practice of the concept - 'time is money', the people of Agartala are compelled to compromise with both time and money together. Agartala is hurtling towards congestion nightmare and untamed energy guzzling because of growing dependence on personal motorized vehicles, which virtually are marginalizing more sustainable modes of transport - public transport system. According to record, two lakh of motorised vehicles plying on about 10,000 kilometres of road including 5230 kilometers of village road and 448 kilometres of National Highway in Tripura for about 40 lakh population as on date. Out of the total vehicles figure, more than 1.5 lakh was registered as personal small cars. As per the guideline, Tripura government has prepared City Development Plan (CDP) in 2006 for Agartala city under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) with the objective to improve the economic and physical infrastructure for the rapidly increasing urban population. Under transportation and communication area, Tripura had prepared Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) for Rs 1300 Crore. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Phase-1, mainly development of road and traffic signaling system in the city for Rs 261 Crore was submitted only in 2010 under JNNURM, which is supposed to be ended in March 2012. It poses most fundamental question, will Agartala be able to implement CMP unless the project period increases beyond 2012.



## Where bureaucracy overpowers

As per the mandate of JNNURM, the authority has to interact with the citizen before preparing the CDP but thanks to bureaucracy and political will of the govt, there was no organised and articulate citizen consultation was done in Tripura. As a result, the demand of amenities and the peoples' participation in JNNURM project are almost zero. It is again the dependency of the government on bureaucrats that brought an Ahmadabad based consultant to prepare CDP for Agartala who practically spent only four days and three nights in the city for preparing the project. Official record shows, the consultant paid three times visit to Agartala during whole exercise and discussed on some aspects from a few selected bureaucrats not the common public. After preparation of CDP neither the state govt nor Agartala Municipal Council (AMC) made any public hearing on CDP that indicates the apathy of govt towards commitment to build infrastructure and ensure citizen friendly governance. In review of JNNURM in Agartala, it reveals despite clear cut guidelines from the Centre to consult every step of activities under the programme with civil society bodies and citizens at large, not a single component of JNNURM follows it. Though record said there was a total of 21 consultations were conducted: Primary stakeholders such as the community, gender groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), those directly affected (positively or negatively) by it. Secondary stakeholders: the secondary stakeholders are the decision makers and policy makers. Secondary stakeholders have been consulted especially on the technical and financial aspects related to the project such as approach, designing of the projects, identification and viability of sub projects, suitability of methods etc.



## Mobility Crisis of Agartala

On an average day about 90,000 vehicles enter and exit Agartala. Location wise analysis reveals that maximum volume of traffic is on the Bishalgarh road. The modal mix reveals about 65% motorized passenger vehicles, 6% of goods vehicles and 29% of non-motorized vehicles. Two wheelers and cars constitute the maximum portion of passenger traffic. On the other, about 50% of the road length is revealed to have width of 8-10 metres. High congestion is seen in some of the traffic nodes due to improper road geometry. In Agartala pedestrian volumes are very high on major roads. At present foot path on both sides of the road exists on Motor Stand Road, Hariganga Basak Road, Fire Brigade Road, Palace Road, and Gol-Bazaar Road but these were encroached by the businessmen.

Sufficient off-street parking spaces are not available in the city. Due to the lack of any authorized and formal parking space, vehicles get parked along the edges of the main city roads, thereby reducing the carriage way of the road. This problem is particularly acute in the areas of Hariganga Basak Road, Netaji Market, Fire Brigade Road and Motor Stand Road. Between the Orient Chowmuhani and the Jakson Gate, authorized on-street parking area has been provided by the Municipal Corporation to accommodate approximately 30 vehicles however this is not sufficient enough to cater the peak demand.

The profile of speeds shows that the speed varies from as low as 8 kmph to 24 kmph. Speed profile presents that about 40% of the road length have speed less than 20kmph. This is primarily because of the various heterogeneous conditions like mixing of fast and slow moving vehicles. About 60% of road length has speed varying from 20-30kmph as it mostly include the major regional roads The accident data, obtained from government records, suggests a declining



trend. At the same time, intermixing of motorised and non-motorised vehicle and aged pollution generating motor vehicles reduced the speed of the city dwellers. Due to slow speed and high parking space requirement, cycle rickshaws are considered as the primary causes of congestion in Agartala. The cycle rickshaws get parked on roadside in the absence of any formal parking lot, causing further obstructions to traffic movement.

To achieve a transport facility that is adequate, safe, comfortable and equitable and is efficient and sustainable an amount of Rs 17 Crore as time grant has been allocated to the state for development of public transport system under JNNURM. Tripura government was expected to put as many as 70 buses on the road by April 2010 but till the date neither any bus ply on the road nor any deadline was announced for introduction of public transport system. Even after four years of introduction of JNNURM, encroachments by vehicles, low operating speeds, congestion in the city, inadequate parking space, improper traffic management, poor public transportation system, lack of pedestrian facilities, enhancement of road capacity, capacity Building of existing public transport system, development of new bypass roads as arterials to decongest the city and road & junction improvements were not improved a single decimal.

## Reality

Agartala has much less number of vehicles compared to other northeastern cities like Aizawl, Kohima and Shillong but its growth rate already equals that of the bigger cities (about 47 percent in 2009-10). Most of these are personal vehicles - cars and two-wheelers that are responsible for choking congestion. Thanks to commercial banks that provides soft loan for