



## SMART CITY MISSION IN NORTHEAST OF INDIA: A STUDY OF AIZAWL SMART CITY

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### ABSTRACT

India, Asia's third-largest economy is becoming one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and its cities stimulated its growth. The Oxford Economics Global Cities Report 2018 estimates that seventeen of the twenty fastest-growing cities in the world between 2019 and 2035 will be from India. According to a study by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) the Indian cities are most likely to contribute to 70 percent of India's GDP by 2030. All of these findings speculate on the faster-growing rate of urbanization that the country is undergoing. But this can truly lead to greater economic growth; however, it also brought out a set of challenges concerning livability or in other words, how to provide a better quality of life for the people. In this regard, the Smart Cities Mission which was implemented since 2015 in 100 cities of India, aims not only for achieving economic growth but focuses on improving the quality of life of people living in these cities. Amongst the 100 cities, the Aizawl City in the state of Mizoram is also one of them. So, this paper tries to understand the implementation of the Smart City Mission in Aizawl City.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, Smart City Mission, Public Services, Aizawl City.

### Introduction

Cities face a lot of pressure of increasing population now a day. Land, infrastructure and environment struggle is massive and civic agencies are grappling with issues like clean air, mobility, sanitation, water, public safety, etc. So there is a need for a better sustainable solution in development (Bahadur, 2009). In this

regard, the Government of India has taken initiative to establish 100 Smart Cities across the country under the Smart Cities Mission here in after referred to as SCM. Aizawl City within the Aizawl District (which is also the capital of Mizoram State) has also been chosen as one of the smart city under SCM. Aizawl, is a beautiful city inhabited along the ridges of steep hills. About 30 percent of the total state

population is living in Aizawl city according to 2011 census. Aizawl is the largest town in the state both area and population wise. Mizoram is the 7<sup>th</sup> most urbanized state in India and Aizawl contributes to 53 percent of the urban population and one-third of the Mizoram state population stays in Aizawl district. Aizawl is by far well connected with other parts of the country through roads and airways. A rail connectivity to Sairang which is only 20kms from Aizawl is under construction. Aizawl is in close proximity to both Myanmar and Bangladesh border. The Kaladan Multimodal Project Connecting Kolkata (India) to Sitewe Port in Myanmar via Mizoram will strengthen its position further. Being a hilly area with its pleasant climate and beautiful green sceneries make immense tourism potential. Based on its strategic location, administrative significance and good connectivity there is a big opportunity for Aizawl to develop as a regional economic hub. In this context, it will be interesting to study how SCM is implemented in Aizawl city (Summarized Projects of Aizawl Smart City, 2020).

### **Smart City Mission in Northeast India**

According to **Table 1**, a total of 10 cities from Northeast India were selected under the SCM. The Smart City Report 2019 states, that out of 1,862 crores for the 10 Smart Cities in North-East Region, Rupees 1,428 crores have been utilized so far, which is 77 per cent. Arunachal Pradesh with its two cities Itanagar and Pasighat has a total amount of Rupees 304 crores released but utilized only Rupees 162 crores (53.59 per cent). Assam with its city Guwahati having Rupees 196 crores fund released and utilized

Rupees 74.25 crores (37.88 percent). Imphal the capital of Manipur received a total of Rupees 196 crores and utilized 143 crores (73.39 percent). In Meghalaya, the city of Shillong received Rupees 55 crores and utilized Rupees 26.23 crores (47.69 percent). Mizoram received Rupees 128 crores, but utilized only Rupees 54.37 crores (42.47 percent), while Nagaland utilized 97.84 percent of the total fund released i.e., Rupees 191.77 crores out of 196 crores. Sikkim with its two cities Gangtok and Namchi having a total of Rupees 537 crores released and utilized Rupees 536.48 crores (99.90 percent). Tripura with its city Agartala received Rupees 250 crores and utilized Rupees 237 crores (94.58 percent) (Nezine Bureau, 2022). The 100 smart cities under the SCM of India according to Smart City Report 2019 were selected to ‘provide and assist with a better core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and a decent quality of life to the people through the application of ‘smart solutions’ Under SCM, the Central Government provides on an average Rs 500 crores for each smart city over five years and an equal amount on a matching basis is required to be contributed by the State Government or the urban local body. The Central Government has extended the period of implementation of SCM till June 2023 (Nezine Bureau, 2022).

### **Vision of Aizawl Smart City Mission**

- a) The vision of Aizawl Smart City proposal is *“Aizawl will be an inclusive, sustainable and resilient city by leveraging its human capital through technology and celebrating its culture and nature”*. The vision state-

**Table 1: Status of Fund released and its Utilization under Smart Cities Mission in Northeast States of India**

State	Smart Cities	Fund Release to Cities (in Crores)	Fund Release (total in Crores)	Utilization (in Crores)	Percentage (%)
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	151.00	304.00	162.92	53.59
	Pasighat	153.00			
Assam	Guwahati		196.00	74.25	37.88
Manipur	Imphal		196.00	143.86	73.39
Meghalaya	Shillong		55.00	26.23	47.69
Mizoram	Aizawl		128.00	54.37	42.47
Nagaland	Kohima		196.00	191.77	97.84
Sikkim	Gangtok	243.00	537.00	536.48	99.90
	Namchi	249.00			
Tripura	Agartala		250.00	237.88	94.58
<b>Total</b>	10 Smart Cities		1862	1427.76	76.67

*Source: Nezine Bureau. 'Smart City Mission in Northeast: Utilisation of fund is the lowest in Assam'. 26th April, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.nezine.com/info/NTBJdWtJaVNPOWtFbVFGbDg2UFdrUT09/smart-city-mission-in-northeast:-utilisation-of-fund-is-the-lowest-in-assam.html> on 10th May 2022*

-ment relates to the city's profile in the following ways (Aizawl Smart City Report, 2018)

- b) The vision is aligned with the unique opportunity for the city to enhance its position as a healthy and an environmentally sustainable city leveraging on its topography, ambient climate and distinct culture and heritage.
- c) The city poses serious challenges in the provision of basic services such as

water supply, power supply, street lightning, storm drain systems, traffic and transportation, motor parking, housing, development to market centers, garbage disposal and many other amenities. Therefore, the vision is to make Aizawl a livable city.

The city's vision takes into account the existing human capital in the city. People are very high on literacy, but not diversified and skilled enough to contribute towards tertiary economic activities. The creation of an ample amount of skill development

initiatives, employment opportunities through developing different assets and amenities will help in achieving economic sustainability.

### **Targets of Aizawl Smart City Mission**

The below mentioned the targets of Aizawl Smart City Mission (Summarized Projects of Aizawl Smart City, 2020):

#### **1. Promoting Aizawl Identity, Culture and Nature:**

Aizawl is the capital city of Mizoram which gives it distinct administrative importance. The city has all-weather multi-modal access through rail, road and air with other parts of the country. It is a key trade gateway of the region. Aizawl has tourism potential in terms of its cultural legacy and pristine natural environment. The yearly domestic tourist footfall is more than five lakhs. Aizawl has a rich cultural legacy. Festivals and fairs are the major tourist attractions in the city. The city has historical monuments and undulating terrains which will be promoted for tourism purposes.

**2. Inclusive Society:** Aizawl is a city with amalgamation of various tribes. The tangible and intangible cultural elements are prominent in the city. The smart city development has to promote this indigenous culture as a tourism interest. Various restaurants, cafes, shops, and stalls will be developed to show case the heritage items of the sepultures. The social inclusion indicates development with all social groups. This includes:

a) *Access to all:* This shall be achieved through the following interventions

- The challenges of the terrain will be overcome through innovative and sensitive solutions to open up the smart city to its differently-abled citizens.
- Making city accessible to all through the application of universal design in the city infrastructure.
- Using tactile distinctions in materials and signage systems to ensure independence of movement for the differently-abled.
- Provision of Non Motorized Transport zones at the city level to promote sustainable mobility.
- Seamless unobstructed movement within the old city.
- Signages, street numbering and housing addressing system.

b) *Institutional strengthening and reforms:*

- The city administration efficiency and effectiveness will be enhanced through continuous reforms and devolution of powers of the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution (74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1994). National Informatics Centre (NIC) developed an accrual based accounting system and e-governance system of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) is operational and will be utilized to bring better

service delivery and greater accountability.

- Focus shall be on the development of e-portals as platforms for two-way communications with all users and beneficiaries to ensure that benefits percolate to all.
- G2C centers shall be established and equipped with e-connectivity, efficient central data backup and secured accessibility for faster redressal of citizen issues.
- Safety of the people and the tourists will be ensured by citywide network of the ‘public eye’ – an initiative of merging community policing with technology, installation of CCTV at strategic locations and developing e-portals for ‘on the spot incidents reporting’ and emergency helpline.

c) *Affordable housing:* Affordable housing will be provided for the citizens and Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category people. This will cater to the housing demand of the citizens.

### 3. **Economic Sustainability:**

- a) The focus is on developing a sustainable economic environment for the available human resources in the city. The human capital can be leveraged through development of skill development centers, arranging building programmes, provision of Multi Utility Facility Centre (MUFC), Command and Control Centre, Startup Centre and Ease of Business

Facilitation Centers, Trade Facility and Exhibition Centers etc. This will help to generate ample amount of employment opportunities for the citizens.

- b) The financial sustainability will be ensured through improving revenue streams (fees and user charges, Public Private Partnership models, land monetization, public infrastructure betterment charges, transfer of development rights, premium on relaxation of rules or additional Floor Space Index (FSI) / Floor Area Ratio (FAR), vacant land tax, land pooling systems, regularization of structures permissible under municipal rules/acts, floating municipal bonds and credit rating and grant –in –aid. Capacity building to manage a large portfolio of smart city projects. Value capture is generated through smart city projects.

### 4. **Promoting Resilience:**

The prime objective of the Aizawl Smart City Mission is to make the city resilient in the service delivery, retaining urban environment and disaster management. Increasing usage of solar energy, increasing green cover, proper solid and liquid waste management and promoting rain water harvesting, promotion of retaining walls, development of smart infrastructure, disaster management facilities, etc will make Aizawl more resilient to cope up with the vulnerable situations.

## **Key Components of Aizawl Smart City**

Some of the key components of Aizawl Smart City are (Summarized Projects of Aizawl Smart City, 2020):

### **1. Making a vibrant, safe and connected city through urban design, landscape and mobility improvements such as:**

- a) Façade improvements in Bara Bazaar market area and streetscape improvement landscape, hardscape, signage, light poles, bollards for shared street concept and pedestrian right of way.
- b) Improvement of overall walk ability and mobility in the area by pedestrian walkways, carriage way improvement, foot over-bridge, improvement of road junction and smart parking.
- c) Construction of multi-utilities facilitation centers at five locations including skill development centers and citizens grievance, public amenities.
- d) Construction of city cultural centre, sport complex, trade facility and exhibition area and skill development cum incubation centre and development of Aizawl tourism corridor.
- e) Safety and security through e-surveillance, CCTV, trauma and emergency services
- f) Refurbishment of Mizoram state museum, digital library and smart school – digital class room (at 29 school pilot basis).

### **2. Providing improved urban infrastructure:**

- i) Potable water and waste water collection system.
  - Provision of 24 x 7 water supplies for the entire area including smart meters and e-billing.
  - Water quality monitoring system
  - Uncovered underground (UG) drainage in Area-Based Development area.
  - Provision of large scale rain water harvesting pond/canal.
- ii) Reconstruction and Up-gradation of storm water drain.
- iii) Integrated Solid Waste Management: ICT enabled components such as collection bins, community bins with RFID tagged, reverse vending machines (Pilot Project).
- iv) Energy and environment: Underground distribution network and eliminating overhead network in underground ducting.
- v) Installation of solar based LED Street lighting.

## **Conclusion**

At present, the cities selected in the Northeast including Aizawl city under the Smart Cities Mission not yet reached the expectation of attaining the position of Smart cities. The issues of socio-economic underdevelopment and inefficient governance had a big impact on the problems faced by these towns and cities. The Smart Cities Mission has brought a huge opportunity to the Northeast region to transform the picture of its cities for sustainable growth and development to take it to the next level. On the other hand, the Mission may only amplify economic, social,

and spatial polarizations within cities which become important issues that need to tackle in the near future.

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