



World Forum on
Urban Forests
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*PS 1.2 The Past –
Changing People and
Benefits*

Policy and legal issues relating to urban forestry in India with particular reference to Meghalaya

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A tide of urbanization in India

**53% spurt in number of towns in India within a decade
2001-11**

Migration from rural to urban area

Natural increase in urban population

Reclassification of rural areas as urban





A plethora of administrative controls

Multiple agencies and Acts deal with urban forestry in India

Urban local bodies (municipalities), Revenue Department and Forest Department between themselves implement Municipal Acts, Indian Forest Act, Land Revenue Code, Master Plans and Bye Laws

'...town planning rules...have mostly followed empirical guidelines and are not based on scientific findings...' Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India





Taking governance to grassroots

- The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992 empowered urban local government in the form of municipalities
- Bottom up approach: A District Planning Committee shall consolidate plans prepared by municipalities in its area
- Urban forestry among subjects entrusted to municipalities





India's North-east: one with forests

- The North-East makes up 7% of the geographical area and a quarter of the country's forest cover
- Sacred groves and living root bridges signify a mystical relationship between communities and greens
- Communities and clans own most of land in Meghalaya





The Constitution and tribal areas

- The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India provides for Autonomous District Councils in the State of Meghalaya
- Power of District Councils includes establishment of town administration
- Traditional socio-political systems in Meghalaya are self-governing institutions





Urbanization in Meghalaya is not by law of nature...

- Urbanization in Meghalaya was 20% in 2001.
- The hill state is not conducive to large urban population. Cities have grown primarily as centers of trade and administration.
- Many urban areas retain strong rural texture





...yet urbanization is inexorable and confounding

- Presently the state has 16 urban centres, predominantly the Shillong Urban Agglomeration (UA)
- Shillong UA comprises seven towns – Shillong Municipality, Shillong Cantonment and five census towns
- Municipal Board and Cantonment Board coexist with traditional bodies practising customary law in the same UA





Focusing on strengths

- The Urban Affairs Department is responsible for development of urban areas in Meghalaya
- Urban Forestry is a specialized domain requiring skill development and expertise





Need for consolidation of human resources and skills

Trained manpower from the Forest Department can serve on deputation on equivalent posts in Urban Affairs Department in the same manner as they are presently deputed to the Autonomous District Councils





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Thank you

