

GMC proves to be a futile organization



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Lack of a marketing policy and 'corrupt' administration has led the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) to a high class 'bankruptcy'. This has developed like an incurable cancer. Out of twelve municipal markets in the city most of them have not been provided even the basic amenities, although the GMC has concentrated its full attention on collecting revenue 'by hook or by crook'.

The GMC is very particular in enhancing the rates and taxes from the genuine traders from time to time, without any discussion or consent of the trading community. For instance, one example can be given of a centrally situated market of the city in Ulubari area. This market was established by the efforts of some eminent persons of adjoining areas in the year 1971. The market accommodated unorganized traders, who were the street vendors since the year 1968. The market started functioning on private vacant piece of land measuring more than one Bigha. Since the traders belonged to economically weaker section of society they formed a Committee of their own, namely, Ulubari Bazar Committee (UBC) and authorized it to negotiate with the GMC, so that the market condition could be improved. The market was handed over to the GMC, with good intention.

Initially, the UBC appealed before the GMC to provide boundary walls, basic amenities, like water and toilets etc; and agreed to pay for the services rendered by it. The traders constructed their stalls and put all their money and labor with a hope to earn their livelihood out of it. The GMC on its part started collecting money through lessees, but no activities were seen in respect of the improvement of the market. The UBC finding no relief from GMC, applied to Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) for lighting in the market. It also constructed the market lanes and boundary walls around the market, besides engaging sweepers and watchmen to keep vigil on the hard earned assets of the poor traders. The GMC authorities kept their 'eyes and ears' closed.

After a lapse of ten years, The GMC came with a proposal of constructing a Super market at the site in the last part of 1980. Security deposits ranging from Rs. 500 to Rs.2,500, were collected from the existing traders and prospective customers for allotment of the stalls and shops after the completion of the market. It was stated that the GMC got a loan from HUDCO amounting to Rs.1.69 crore for the construction of the Super market. To utter surprise of the traders, no activities were seen at the site, till in November 1986, the GMC circulated a brochure among the citizens that the construction of a five storey commercial centre was in progress at Ulubari. It was a 'bolt from the blue' for the aspirants when they were asked to take back their security amount, just after three months of the news of market under construction, on the ground that the GMC was not in position to construct the market due to unavailability of the funds from HUDCO. Unfortunately, the people who gave the security amount could not get the money back till now.

The most interesting aspect of the functioning of the GMC is that the hundreds of letters written to it are neither replied nor even acknowledged. The GMC knows only to direct their people to collect money from the traders anyhow. Several organizations have demanded from the GMC to publish white paper on the receipts and expenses of GMC, which have not been published as yet.

On June 12, 2007, while an UBC team visited the GMC office, it was verbally conveyed that the work for construction of a modern market had been assigned to Asian Development Bank (ADB). The representatives of ADB, the LEA Associates, surveyed the market area, held workshop with the traders and submitted its project report to GMC in September 2007, which is still awaiting clearance. The businessmen have taken it as the GMC is only interested in collection of funds without doing any service to the society. It has proved completely a 'bankrupt' and futile organization.

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